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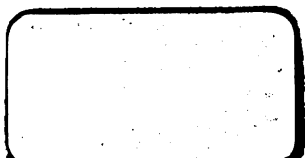
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"I CAN wonder at nothing more than how a man can be idle—but of all others, a scholar,—in so many improvements of reason, in such sweetness of knowledge, in such variety of studies, in such importunity of thoughts. To find wit in poetry; in philosophy, profoundness; in history, wonder of events; in oratory, sweet eloquence; in divinity, supernatural light, and holy devotion—as so many rich metals in their proper mines,—whom would it not ravish with delight?"—BISHOP HALL : *Epistle to Mr. Milward*.

"Comforts, yea! joys ineffable they find,
Who seek the prouder pleasures of the mind :
The soul, collected in those happy hours,
Then makes her efforts, then enjoys her powers.
No! 'tis not worldly gain, although, by chance,
The sons of learning may to wealth advance;
Nor station high, though in some favouring hour
The sons of learning may arrive at power;
Nor is it glory, though the public voice
Of honest praise will make the heart rejoice;
But 't is the mind's own feelings give the joy,—
PLEASURES SHE GATHERS IN HER OWN EMPLOY."

CRABBE : *The Borough*, Letter xxiv.

PLEASURES, OBJECTS,
AND
ADVANTAGES
OF
LITERATURE.



A Discourse

BY

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TO
HIS MOTHER,
THESE
PLEASURES OF LITERATURE,
THE DIM REMEMBRANCES OF EARLY DAYS,
Are inscribed
BY
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

WHEN three or four Tourists are met together, who have formerly visited the same countries, it is amusing to observe their different impressions of the scenery. A mountain prospect delighted one, which another overlooked or disregarded; while a fourth remembers an Alpine valley, unknown to his companions, and of unequalled grandeur. The seasons and the hours most favourable to picturesque enjoyment also suggest many

friendly discussions; a separate eulogist being found for sunrise, evening, and moonlight.

The Author would not be surprised if the readers of the following Discourse should resemble the party of travellers,—some complaining of fine scenes of fancy or learning that are left out; and others of inferior views too elaborately presented. Variety must always be an accident of Opinion. The Writer, therefore, offers his sketches for what they may be worth. He believes them to have the merit of truth; they were taken on the spot by one who really made the Tour. He hopes that his errors are neither serious, nor many; but the recollection of a remark upon a former publication induces him to say, that he is in the habit of writing the

names of Painters and Authors as they appear in the classical Criticism and Biography of the eighteenth century;—in Warton, Gilpin, Price, and Reynolds,—without reference to the latest Hand-book, or Dictionary. To any graver objections he can only reply by adopting the request of one of the oldest living Poets in England, that all the fault-finders will fit down immediately and excel him as much as they can; which he sincerely desires may be as much as they please.

*Prose by a
Poet, i. 27.*

ST. CATHERINE'S,

April 3, 1851.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. — Two Characters of Language -	1
II. — Books more enduring than Pictures - - - -	5
III. — Great Authors reflected in their Writings - - - -	8
IV. — Classical Studies: their Associations and Interest - -	10
V. — Literature differs from Science in its Birth and Growth -	14

	PAGE
VI. — Objects and Limitations of this Discourse - - - -	21
VII. — The three essential Qualities of an Author - - - -	26
VIII. — Elegance and Harmony the Fruit of Toil - - - -	33
IX. — Unity of Purpose necessary to Success - - - -	43
X. — Different Seasons of Intellectual Maturity - - - -	48
XI. — The Influence of Air and Situ- ation upon the Thoughts -	55
XII. — Mental Delights of early Life -	58
XIII. — Taste, its Nature and Delights -	65
XIV. — Taste, an Inheritance and a Fashion - - - -	72
XV. — A pure and cultivated Taste feldom found - - - -	78

CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE
XVI. — Taste puts an Author in a proper Light - - -	87
XVII. — Books which are adapted to different Seasons - -	95
XVIII. — Diligence the Handmaid of Taste - - -	101
XIX. — Taste selects a few Authors for Friends - - -	105
XX. — Criticism, its Curiosities and Researches - - -	108
XXI. — Criticism viewed in its judicial Character - - -	115
XXII. — Criticism opens fresh Springs of Enjoyment - - -	118
XXIII. — Criticism, in educating Taste, weakens Bigotry - -	122
XXIV. — Criticism the Centre of many Lines - - -	126
XXV. — Poetry, its Shapes and Beauties - - -	131

	PAGE
XXVI. — Verification, the Charm of	
Sound - - - -	143
XXVII. — Satire excluded from Poetry	158
XXVII. — The Drama, its Character	
and Entertainment - -	159
XXVIII. — Comedy and Farce : their	
Infirmities - - -	164
XXIX. — The Delights and Consola-	
tions of Poetry - -	169
XXX. — Poetry should be studied in	
early Life - - -	178
XXXI. — Fiction : the Romance and	
the Novel - - -	181
XXXII. — History : its Charms and Les-	
sons - - - -	203
XXXIII. — The chosen Flowers of His-	
tory — Biography - -	223
XXXIV. — Literature of the Pulpit — its	
Entertainment - -	252

CONTENTS.

XV

	PAGE
XXXV. — Philofophy and its Pleafures	266
XXXVI. — The Study of Languages -	271
XXXVII. — Domeftic Intèriors of Learning and Taftè -	276
XXXVIII. — Accountablenefs of Authors	286
XXXIX. — The cultivated Mind and the uninformed - -	293
. XL. — The Parting Word - -	298

PLEASURES, OBJECTS, AND
ADVANTAGES,
OF
LITERATURE.

THERE are two aspects under which we might regard language, as a channel for communicating instruction and pleasure. One would be SPEECH. Two characters of Language.—Speech. How astonishing it is to know that a man may stand in the crowd of learned or ignorant, thoughtful or reckless hearers—all the elements of reason and passion tumultuously tossed together,—and knock at the door of each heart in succession! Think how this wonder has been wrought already. By Demosthenes waving the stormy

Democracy into a calm, from a funny hill-side ; by Plato enchaining the souls of his disciples, under the boughs of a dim plane-tree ; by Cicero in the stern silence of the Forum ; by our own Chatham in the chapel of St. Stephen.

They knocked and entered ; wandered through the bosoms of their hearers ; threaded the dark labyrinths of feeling ; aroused fiercest passions in their lone concealment. They did more. In every heart they erected a throne ; they gave laws. The Athenian populace started up with one accord and one cry to march upon Philip ; the Senate throbbed with indignation at Catiline ; and the British Parliament was dissolved for a few hours, that it might recover from the wand of the enchanter.

Utterance of
the Press the
more power-
ful and
enduring.

But it is in the second manifestation of language that the most marvellous faculty resides : the written out-lives

and out-dazzles the spoken word. The life of rhetoric perishes with the rhetorician; it darkens with his eye, stiffens with his hand, freezes with his tongue. The bows of eloquence are buried with the Archers. Where is the splendid declamation of Bolingbroke? It has vanished like his own image from the grass-plots of Twickenham.

The Orator
survives
only in tra-
dition.

That utterance to which the Printing-press gives a body, an unquenchable spirit inhabits. Literature is the immortality of speech. It embalms for all ages the departed kings of intellect, and watches over their repose in the eternal pyramids of Fame. The golden cities which have lighted the world since the beginning of time, are now beheld only in the pictures of the historian or the poet. Homer rebuilds Troy, and Thucydides renews the war of Peloponnesus. The dart that pierced the Persian breast-plate

moulders in the dust of Marathon ;
but the arrow of Pindar quivers, at
this hour, with the life of his bow ;
like the discus of Hippomedon,

“*Jamque procul meminit dextræ, servatque
tenorem.*”

Illumina-
tion of Lite-
rature in the
dark ages.

We look with grateful eyes upon
this preservative power of Literature.
When the Gothic night descended
over Europe, Virgil and Livy were
nearly forgotten and unknown ; but
far away, in lone corners of the earth,
amid silence and shadow, the ritual of
Genius continued to be solemnized :
without, were barbarism, storm, and
darkness ; within, light, fragrance,
and music. So the sacred fire of
Learning burnt upon its scattered
shrines, until torch after torch carried
the flame over the world.

II.—BOOKS MORE ENDURING THAN PICTURES.

ART has been less happy in its self-protection. Look at Correggio's "Notte" where the light breaks from the Heavenly Child. Towards the close of the last century, a director of the Dresden Gallery removed the *toning*, and deprived the picture of one of its fairest charms. Fifty years ago, observers complained that the colour was gone from the "Cornaro Family" of Titian. The Helen of Homer and the Faëry Queen of Spenser are safe from such a catastrophe. Lalage has not lost a dimple. The tears still glisten in the eyes of Erminia. The coarsest rubbings of critical pens, or the harsher resolvents of digamma and allegory, have left the features, and even the bloom of expression, unimpaired. The poem, or history, is also protected from the

Injuries sustained by Correggio and Titian.

Gilpin's Observations on the Western Parts of England, p. 115.

Dryden on Pictures.

restorer. Lord Orford told Gilpin that the great Vandyck at Wilton had been retouched by an inferior pencil, to which some of its discord of colours may be attributed. Dryden constructed a graceful allegory of Time, leaning over the work of a great Master, with that ready pencil and ripening hand which

“Mellow the colours and imbrown the tint.”

But Pope wrote the true story of Art when he said, with the exquisite taste and feeling with which he always spoke of painters, as Milton of music, and Thomson of scenery,—

Essay on Criticism, v. 31.

“So when the faithful pencil has design'd
Some bright idea of the master's mind,
When a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light;
When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treacherous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away.”

It is not pretended that the genius of the pen is safe from all casualties that beset his brother of the pencil. I have not forgotten Hume's letter to Robertson about the gentleman who, sending for a pound of raisins, received them wrapt up in the Doctor's highly-drawn character of Queen Elizabeth. Literature has its complaint, as well as its pæan. The splendid libraries of Rome are consumed by fire, and the unknown treasures of Greece perish in the sack of Constantinople. Still the poet and the historian maintain their supremacy over the artist and the sculptor. A mob shatters into dust that statue of Minerva whose limbs seemed to breathe under the flowing robe, and her lips to move; but the fierceness of the Goth, the ignorance of the Crusader, and the phrenzy of the Polemic, have not destroyed, or mutilated, Penelope and Electra. Apelles

Stewart's
Life of
Robertson,
p. 247.

Gibbon, v.
171.

dies ; Æschylus lives. We have lost Phidias ; but Homer gives us a Jupiter in gold.

III.—GREAT AUTHORS REFLECTED IN THEIR WRITINGS.

ONE of the Spanish Romancers describes Cydippe contemplating herself in a glass, and the power of Venus making the reflexion permanent. The fable is realised in the history of Literature. A book becomes a glass with the author's face upon it. In the productions of mere talent, the image is imperfect,—the broken glimmer of a countenance. But the features of Genius, once cast upon the mirror of language, remain unruffled. Time guards the shadow. Beauty, the spiritual Venus, whose children are the Spensers, the Tassos, the Ba-

A book a
mirror to
show the
writer.

cons, breathes the magic of her love,
and fixes the face for ever.

These glasses of fancy, eloquence, or wisdom, possess a stranger power. Illuminated by the sun of fame, they throw rays over bending and reverent admirers: the beholder carries away some of the gilding lustre. The light of Genius never sets; it spreads from countenance to countenance. Homer glows in the softened beauty of Virgil, and Spenser revives in the decorated learning of Gray. Lord Bacon touches this reproductiveness of mind with his accustomed felicity:—

“The images of men’s wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation. So that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how

*Influence of
Genius on
those who
contemplate
it.*

*Advance-
ment of
Learning,
p. 91.*

Ancient
history the
most pic-
turefque.

Softening
shades of
time ; the
English
soldier in
Spain and
Palestine.

Battles at
sea ; Drake
and Nelson.

day, pours a still, melancholy voice along the fading landscape of years. He remembers whom and what he has lost. Even without this sympathy of association, classic story and fancy have a livelier interest than the modern ; they are shaded by the twilight into which they are withdrawn. Delille indicated the defect of the *Henriade* by saying that it was too near to the eye and the age. It has been suggested that Milton might have thrown his angelic warfare into remoter perspective. The fame of a battle-field grows with its years ; Napoleon storming the Bridge of Lodi, and Wellington surveying the towers of Salamanca, affect us with fainter emotions than Brutus reading in his tent at Philippi, or Richard bearing down with the English chivalry upon the white armies of Saladin. Nelson leading the line of war-ships against Copenhagen is less picturesque than

Drake crowding his canvass after the galleons of Spain. One fleet lies under our eye; the other is enveloped in mist, and,

“Far off at sea descried,
Hangs in the clouds.”

As we grow older, the poet and historian of our boyhood and youth become dearer. The thyme of Theocritus is wafted over the memory with a refreshing perfume. By a sort of natural magic, we raise the ghost of each intellectual Pleasure, and make it appear, without any dependence upon climate or time. The mind is illuminated, and the Pageant of Learning marches along in its dignity and splendour. In an ode of Horace, Sanderson heard the soothing music of a viol, and Hooker forgot the untunable murmurs of his wife.

Jeremy Collier. Essays, part ii. p. 193.

V.—LITERATURE DIFFERS FROM SCIENCE IN ITS BIRTH AND GROWTH.

Literature
not induc-
tive.

UNLIKE Science, Literature is not inductive. Its secrets are never discovered by scholars, tracking obscure hints which nature, or their ancestors, had dropped. A basket, left on the ground and overgrown by acanthus, suggests the Corinthian capital; the contemplation of the sun's rays along a wall produces the achromatic telescope; the movements of a frog reveal the wonders of galvanism; and an idle boy shows the way to perfect the steam-engine. Nothing of this kind ever happened in literature. It begins with the *Iliad*. The curtain rises from the Agamemnon of Æschylus. Pitt borrows of Demosthenes. Robertson does not heighten the colours of Livy; nor Montesquieu out-gaze the sagacity of Tacitus.

The Homeric poems are the Pleasures of Literature in an abridgement. They are the sap circulating through every leaf of the tree of knowledge, and shedding blossoms on the furthest bough. Homer, than dramatists more dramatic, was the founder of the theatre and peopled the stage. The Greek tragedy is the epic re-cast, the narrative being broken into dialogue; and the poet disappearing in the Chorus. All the gentler shapes of fancy, seen in the lyrical poetry of Greece, were only flowers growing round his massive trunk, and sheltered by the majesty of his shade.

Homer.
The Drama
created by
him.

Nor in verse alone was his presence perceived and felt. See, in the wide-flowing stream of Plato's philosophy, the rich fruits of the Poet's imagination pouring down into the transparent depths, the reflected shadows of their beauty. The ear catches the

He
gives a
colour to
Plato.

Early history
preserves
the poetical
tone.

epic tune in the simpler melodies of Herodotus. It is easy to see why Arnold's eyes filled with tears at the story of Cleobis and Biton, rewarded for their filial piety by falling asleep in the temple, and dying together; and why he sat by the sick-bed of his dying sister, translating whole books into the quainter English of old chronicles.

Homer, the
founder of
criticism.

The under-current of Epic song sometimes freshens the dry track of Aristotle's severe inquiries, and betrays its hidden course by unexpected flushes of verdure and bloom over the hard surface. Himself the subject of all criticism, he let down from his blue heaven of starry thoughts the golden scales, in which his own genius was to be weighed. And whosoever, in this calm weather of refinement and civilization, sets out upon a voyage of poetical discovery, or pleasure, is

“Led by the light of the Mæonian star.”

If we turn to Romance, we see its green world of beauty, pathos, and wisdom, rising from the fruitful waves of the Homeric inundation. Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses present outlines of every hero who has won admiration, or drawn tears. The two former embody, in outward grace and vigour, the dreams, the enterprise, and the affections of bright and passionate manhood; the latter is a type of the tried spirit, educated and ennobled by difficulties endured and overcome.

Elements of fiction contained in the Iliad and Odyffey.

Let Homer signify “a faithful witness;” and who, in portraying the glory, or the shame, of the manly or the womanly heart, is more eloquent or true? The *Odyffey* is a circulating library in one volume. All lights and shades of fiction chase each other along the page. The border-story, the exploits of chivalry, the

Truthfulness of delineation.

fairy-legend, the solemn allegory, the picture of manners, the laughter-moving sketch—each drops, in turn, from the mysterious lips of the Asiatic Shakspeare. A thousand costly morals are treasured in Telemachus conducted by Mentor. What countless Ladies of Shalott have descended from Calypso, who, in her lonely island of the purple sea,

Odyssey, by
Cowper,
b. v. 73.

“ Busied with the loom, and plying fast
Her golden shuttle, with melodious voice,
Sat chaunting there.”

The Homeric characters live and walk among us. Therfites grumbles and sneers; Ulysses constantly finds his way home, as the fortunate adventurer; and Penelope has been re-appearing, for the last two centuries, in the deserted, or the tempted wife.

Gothic
inspiration
found in
Homer.

The key of the supernatural, which, in later times, unlocked the haunted chambers of *Udolpho*, was certainly held by him who caused Mount Ida,

the Greek fleet, and the Trojan city, to tremble all over as the Gods came down into battle. And not very obscurely may be seen rising over the epic mist, the battlements of that Castle, which, as we learn from Gray, made Cambridge men "in general afraid to go to bed o' nights." The ghost of Alphonso, growing every moment more gigantic in the moonlight, is not conceived with a fearfuller sweep of Gothic magnificence, than the enormous stride of Achilles in the world of spirits, when he heard that the son was worthy of the father. The Poet's Hades had mightier and stranger inhabitants than *Otranto*. Even the school of horrors may date its beginning from the cave of Polyphemus, when the spear of olive-wood hissed in the flaming socket of his lost eye. Reckon up the enchantments of Circe; the escape from the Sirens; affection in humble life, as

Gray's
Letters,
Dec. 30th.
1764

Horace
Walpole's
Story.

Odyfsey,
b. xi.

Melodrama
of narrative
indicated in
the *Odyfsey*.

exhibited by Eümæus ; the retributive phrenzy sent upon the suitors of Penelope, and the bending of the wonderful bow. Call to mind those delicious scenes from nature, which make the reading of his verses to be like opening a window into a garden, when the south wind fans the roses up the wall. Think over his noble sentiments, and his many lessons of wisdom, generosity, and patience ; compare his poetical fire—swallowing everything base in its mighty rush,—with the mild lustre of Virgil, the artificial glow of Milton, or the accidental flames of Shakspeare : and confess that Homer is not only the Poet, but the Historian, the Philosopher, the Painter, the Critic, and the Romancer of the world.

VI.—OBJECTS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS DISCOURSE.

I do not propofe to fpeak of literature in the wideft fense, as including Gray to Walpole, 1747. everything that requires invention, judgment, or induftry, but only in its decorative character. For, as out of three primitive colours the pencil creates nine, and leffer tints and shades innumerable, fo from the elements of Poetry, Eloquence, and Philofophy, the variegated graces of the Divine, the Hiftorian, and the Novelist, are compofed. Bacon referred the three Advance-
ment of
Learning,
106. parts of learning to the corresponding qualities of the intellect; Hiftory to the memory, Poetry to the imagination, and Philofophy to the Reafon. My fubject is the ornamental in knowledge. But fince the criterion of ufefulness is found in the refult, whatever is beautiful is alfo profitable. The pictures of Raffaele teach Beauty and
Utility.—
Raffaele
and Taylor.

Du Choix
des Etudes,
96.

Owen
Felltham,
Resolves,
xxvii.

virtue, and a sermon of Taylor is more binding than an Act of Parliament. This truth should be kept in view. Education is the apprenticeship of life. Fleury furnishes an excellent test for valuing an acquirement in this question: Would a man seek it, if he were to live in perfect solitude, and never speak to a human being? A discourse upon literature is not unlike a landscape seen from a hill. Only here and there may we hope to catch a glimpse of the great river of learning, "whose head, being far in the land, is, at first rising, little and easily viewed; but still, as you go, it gapeth with a wider bank—not without pleasure and delightful winding,—while it is on both sides set with trees and the beauty of various flowers; but still, the further you follow it, the deeper and the broader it is, till, at last, it enwaves itself in the unfathomed ocean." But we shall

have clearer impressions of what we see, in proportion as our gaze is patient and our objects are few.

Science is not embraced in the Pleasures of Literature. Refined readers and noble authors are made without it. Ingenuity has endeavoured to show its healthful influence on the inventive faculty. A biographer of Tasso traces his lucid method to this harsher erudition, and the intricacy of Spenser to the neglect of it. Virgil and Milton are called as witnesses for the argument; but he who sees the symmetry of the *Æneid* in the geometry of the author, could account for the rural sweetness of the *Elegy* by the botany of Gray. Genius finds its own road, and carries its own lamp. The fourth proposition of Euclid troubled Alfieri for several years, yet he could construct a story, and reason in verse. It must not, however, be supposed that they who

Why
Science is
not
included.

Alfieri.

Scott's
Prose
Works, ii.
294-

despise a study, are always unequal to it. Swift seldom failed to ridicule mathematicians, but he also declared their attainments to be easy; and once, to support his judgment, he solved a difficult problem with speed. If logic be recommended, a clear head has no need of its help. Fleury might doubt its usefulness, when he observed how many persons reason well who do not know it, and badly, who do. Butler will teach an eye to be steady, without going to Aldrich.

Mathemati-
cal studies:
in what
they are
wanting.

Mathematical pursuits have one leading defect; they engage the understanding, without cultivating, or nourishing it. Disciplinary, which must be educational, studies, can only be useful to a full mind; if they find it empty, they leave it in the same state. They resemble an elaborate mechanism to convey water, without a fountain or reservoir to feed the pipes. In moral impression they are powerless,

Burnet puts this objection with force :

—“ Learning chiefly in mathematical sciences can so swallow up and fix

Opinion of
Bishop
Burnet.

one's thought, as to possess it entirely for some time ; but when that amusement is over, nature will return, and be where it was, being rather diverted than overcome by such speculations.”

These, among other reasons, induced

Bossuet to banish science from theological reading, and Fénelon to turn

Bossuet and
Fénelon.

from what he called the diabolism of

Euclid. We have the humiliating confession of a most famous English astronomer, to serve as a note for the

Mathematical re-
searches un-
favourable
to devotional
feelings.

poetical lamentation, that—

“ Never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation, and discovers—else
Not visible,—His family of worlds,
Discover Him that rules them : such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine.”

Cowper, pursuing with the eyes of devotion and love the summer fun,

The poet's
religion
compared

with the
astrono-
mer's.

as it set over the village spire of Emberton, may have felt his heart swelling with a grander sense of its Creator's glory, than has often quickened the pulse of all the watchers of the stars, from the Chaldeans to Herschel.

VII.—THE THREE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF AN AUTHOR.

Art, Medi-
tation, and
Exercise,—
the wings of
Learning.
Composing
early.—
Mozart.

SIR Philip Sidney said that the most flying wits must have three wings,—Art, Meditation, Exercise. Genius is the instinct of flight. A boy came to Mozart, wishing to compose something, and inquiring the way to begin. Mozart told him to wait. "You composed much earlier." "But asked nothing about it," replied the musician. Cowper expressed the same sentiment to a friend:—"Nature gives men a bias to their respective pursuits,

and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by Genius." M. Angelo is hindered in his childish studies of art; Raffaele grows up with pencil and colours for playthings: one neglects school to copy drawings, which he dared not to bring home; the father of the other takes a journey to find his son a worthier teacher. M. Angelo forces his way; Raffaele is guided into it. But each looks for it with longing eyes. In some way or other, the man is tracked in the little footsteps of the child. Dryden marks the three steps of progress:—

<p>“What the child <i>admired</i>, The youth ENDEAVOURED, and the man ACQUIRED.”</p>	<p>D’Israeli, <i>Miscellanies</i>, p. 252.</p>
--	--

Dryden was an example of his own theory. He read Polybius, with a notion of his historic exactness, before he was ten years old. Witnesses rise over the whole field of learning. Pope,

at twelve, feasted his eyes in the picture-galleries of Spenfer. Murillo filled the margin of his school-books with drawings. Le Brun, in the beginning of childhood, drew with a piece of charcoal on the walls of the house. The young Ariosto quietly watched the fierce gestures of his father, forgetting his displeasure in the joy of copying from life, into a comedy he was writing, the manner and speech of an old man enraged with his son.

Essays :
Of myself.

Cowley, in the history of his own mind, shows the influence of boyish fancies upon later life. He compares them to letters cut in the bark of a young tree, which grow and widen with it. We are not surpris'd to hear from a schoolfellow of the Chancellor Somers that he was a weakly boy, who always had a book in his hand, and never looked up at the play of his companions ; to learn from

School life
of Somers
and Ham-
mond.

his affectionate biographer, that Hammond at Eton fought opportunities of stealing away to say his prayers; to read that Tournefort forsook his college class, that he might search for plants in the neighbouring fields; or that Smeaton, in petticoats, was discovered on the top of his father's barn, in the act of fixing the model of a windmill which he had constructed. These early traits of character are such as we expect to find in the cultivated lawyer, who turned the eyes of his age upon Milton; in the Christian, whose life was one varied strain of devout praise; in the naturalist, who enriched science by his discoveries; and in the engineer, who built the Eddystone Lighthouse.

The instinct of flight is combined with the instinct of labour. Genius lights its own fire; but it is constantly collecting materials to keep alive the flame. When a new publication was

Tournefort
and Smeaton

Diligence
accompanies
Genius

Addison's
caution.

suggested to Addison, after the completion of the *Guardian*, he answered, "I must now take some time, *pour me délasser*, and lay in fuel for a future work." The strongest blaze soon goes out when a man always blows and never feeds it. Johnson declined an introduction to a popular author with the remark, that he did not desire to converse with a person who had written more than he had read.

Johnsoniana
(Hawkins,
211).

It is interesting to follow great authors or painters in their careful training and accomplishing of the mind. The long morning of life is spent in making the weapons and the armour, which manhood and age are to polish and prove. Usher, when only twenty years old, formed the daring resolution of reading all the Greek and Latin Fathers, and with the dawn of his thirty-ninth year he completed the task. Hammond, at Oxford, gave thirteen hours of the

Life by El-
rington, 5.

Life by Fell,
7.

day to philosophy and classical literature, wrote commentaries on all, and compiled indexes for his own use. Milton's youthful studies were the landscapes and the treasury of his blindness and his want.

The sister art teaches the same lesson. Claude watched every colour of the skies, the trees, the grass, and the water. The younger Vandervelde transferred the atmospheric changes to large sheets of blue paper, which he took in the boat when he went, as he said, in his Dutch-English, "a skoying" on the Thames. "I have neglected nothing," was the modest explanation which N. Pouffin gave of his success.

With these calls to industry in our ears, we are not to be deaf to the deep saying of Lord Brooke, the friend of Sidney, that some men overbuild their nature with books. The motion of our thoughts is impeded by too heavy

Preparation
of Painters :
Claude,
Vander-
velde, and
N. Pouffin.

Sir William
Temple,
Works, iii.
447.

a burden; and the mind, like the body, is strengthened more by the warmth of exercise than of clothes. When Buffon and Hogarth pronounced genius to be nothing but labour and patience, they forgot history and themselves. The instinct must be in the mind, and the fire be ready to fall. Toil alone would not have produced the *Paradise Lost*, or the *Principia*. The born dwarf never grows to the middle size. Rousseau tells a story of a painter's servant, who resolved to be the rival or the conqueror of his master. He abandoned his livery to live by his pencil. But, instead of the Louvre, he stopped at a sign-post. Mere learning is only a compiler, and does with the pen what the compositor does with the type,—each sets up a book with the hand. Stone-masons collected the dome of St. Paul's, but Wren hung it in air.

Inclination
useless with-
out power.

Montes-
quieu, *Lettres Per-
sanes*, lxvi.

VIII.—ELEGANCE AND HARMONY
THE FRUIT OF TOIL.

EASE, when it has become constitutional, is called Grace. Until he had got his one tune by heart, Gibbon wrote slowly. The simpler periods of Goldsmith flowed with painful effort. Goldsmith. “Everybody,” was his own complaint, “wrote better, because he wrote faster than I.” Cowper confesses that his pleasant *Task* was constructed with weariness and watching. Burke’s gorgeous imagery had very little of that rush which is commonly heard in it. Addison wore out the patience of his printer; and Dr. Warton assures us, that when a whole impression of a *Spectator* was nearly worked off, he would frequently stop the press to insert a new preposition.

The authority of Pope may seem to contradict the argument. He de-

clared that what he wrote the quickest pleased him best, as the *Essay on Criticism*, the *Rape of the Lock*, and a large portion of the *Iliad*. But the miracle melts as we look at it. Of the first poem the materials were previously digested in prose; the Sylph-machinery was a supplement to the second; and the manuscript of the third may be consulted in our National Library. A truer portrait of the poet in his study will be found in his elegant epistle to Jervas, where he reminds his friend of their meditative hours,—

Works,
vi. 46.

“ How oft in pleasing tasks we wear the day,
While summer suns roll unperceived away !
How oft our slowly-growing works impart,
While images reflect from art to art !”

The quick
and the slow
composer—
Lope de
Vega and
Milton.

Speed in composition is a questionable advantage. Poetic history records two names which may represent the rapid and the thoughtful pen,—Lope de Vega and Milton. We see

one pouring out verses more rapidly than a secretary could write them ; the other building up, in the watches of the dark, a few majestic lines ; one leaving his treasures to be easily compressed into a single volume ; the other, to be spread abundantly over forty-six quartos ; one gaining fifteen pounds ; the other, a hundred thousand ducats ; one sitting at the door of his house, when the sun shone, in a coarse coat of grey cloth, and visited only by a few learned men from foreign countries ; the other, followed by crowds, whenever he appeared, while even the children shouted after him with delight.

It is only since the earth has fallen on both, that the fame and the hon-
Fame, before and after death.
 ours of the Spaniard and the Englishman have been changed. He, who nearly finished a comedy before breakfast, now lies motionless in his small niche of monumental biography ; and

he who, long choofing, began late, is walking up and down, in his finging robes and with the laurel round his head, in the cities of many lands; having his home and his welcome in every devout heart, and upon every learned tongue of the Chriftian world.

Rapidity of
Genius
variously
obtained.
Raffaelle &
Rembrandt.

Of course, the frequent writer will, in time, be fwift. The practifed is the ready hand. Raffaelle, who painted a head with fuch fine touches that it feems to have been finifhed by fingle hairs, could almoft work as quickly as Rembrandt, who laid on his colour with a palette-knife. Dryden's mastery of language and rhyme enabled him to remit to Tonfon an infalment of feven thoufand five hundred verfes; and Johnson, from the fulnefs of his mind, produced *Raffelas* in the evenings of one week.

Genius eafily hews out its figure from the block. But the fleeplefs chifel gives it life. We have, in the

practice of Titian, an interesting view of the steps by which excellence is won. He began a picture by striking off an outline in four pencillings ; he then put it aside, sometimes allowing months to go by before he looked at it again ; when he resumed his work, it was with the watchfulness of a rival. The last corrections were given by daily touches. Virgil composed verses in the same manner. He commenced a figure, or a landscape, in rough sketches. What drawings of a painter should we have found in his scattered notes ! What studies did he make of that Carthaginian queen, before she rose from his poetry in the splendour of her charms ! He produced a few lines in the morning, and spent days, or months, in shaping and adorning them. He was the artist rubbing in tints over the delicate surface of words,—

How Titian painted.

Virgil ; his collections.

“ And Titian’s colour looks like Virgil’s art.”

Buffon's
manner of
composing.

Buffon has told us how he moulded his loose sentences into symmetry. So often did he turn a paragraph in his mind, and on his tongue,—speaking it over and over until his ear was satisfied,—that he was able to repeat whole pages of his works.

Beauty of
style com-
pared to
glass.

This transparency of diction is only found in productions of the strongest Genius. A burning invention makes it. That exquisite material, through which we gaze on our woods and gardens, obtains its crystalline beauty after undergoing the processes of the furnace. It was melted by fire before the rough particles of sand disappeared, and the fibres of the leaf, or the streaks of the tulip were discerned. Similar operations refine language. Imagination mingles the harsh elements of composition until—each coarse, shapeless word being absorbed by the heat,—they brighten into that smooth and unclouded style, through

which the slightest emotions of the heart, and the faintest colours of fancy, are reflected.

The theologian, the poet, the historian, or the philosopher who has this lucidness of utterance, is certain of a wide and lasting reputation. It made Ariosto the Homer of Italy, and gathered all ranks and ages to his knees. Taste and Science, Love and Beauty, hung upon his lips. He was the companion of the maiden and the scholar, of a starry Galileo, and a knight in armour. Whatever is pure is also simple. It does not keep the eye on itself. The observer forgets the window in the landscape it displays. A fine style gives the view of Fancy—its figures, its trees, or its palaces,—without a spot. But to a diseased eye crystal is cold. Hence it happens that the lawful masters of language are sometimes deposed, for a season, by the daring of literary revolu-

Its advantage and charm.

Some modern extravagancies of style characterized.

tionists. A barbaric uproar drowns the musical voices of Addison and his brethren. One idiom jangles another out of tune; all is discord: as of a band of bricklayers from Babel, trampling their way home through a thicket of nightingales. In reading some modern authors, who have nothing of the tripod or the oracle, except the frenzy and the darkness, we are reminded of the pleasant correction which Ménage inserted in the *Délices d'Esprit* of a flighty Frenchman: "Au lieu de *Délices*, lisez *Délires*."

True vigour
always
graceful.

The exhibition of real strength is never grotesque. Distortion is the agony of weakness. It is the dislocated mind whose movements are spasmodic. Pressure of thought may overburden sentences with meaning, as in the *Analogy* of Butler, or in the rhymes of Cowley. Swift confessed to Pope that he had been obliged to read parts of the *Essay on Man* twice

over. It was not obscure, but deep. The *Bard* of Gray, and Collins's *Ode* Gray and Collins ; why obscure. on the poetical character, seem dark ; the former from its historical, the latter from its metaphysical allusions. Numerous passages of Milton are incomprehensible to a reader whose knowledge is not large in chivalry, romance, or classical legends. Take the magnificent description of Satan arming his legions, and feeling his heart swell with pride, as he gazes upon the myriads before him :—

“ For never since created man Par. Lost, bk. i. 573.
 Met such imbodyed force, as named with these
 Could merit more than that small infantry
 Warr'd on by cranes : though all the giant brood
 Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd
 That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
 Mix'd with auxiliar gods ; and what resounds
 In fable or romance of Uther's son,
 Begirt with British and Armoric knights ;
 And all who since, baptized or infidel,
 Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
 Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebifond,

Or whom Biferta sent from Afric shore,
 When Charlemain, with all his peerage, fell
 By Fontarabia."

The use of
 notes.

In such cases, notes, which are the dictionary of ignorance, will open the chambers of imagery to one who knocks; and when the sentiment, or the illustration, has been disengaged, it delights the eye of taste by its symmetry or grandeur. A foreign writer may fairly claim of his reader a sufficient acquaintance with the language. The idioms of Genius will always present obscurities to the uninformed; they are to be learned, as a man learns to translate a dialect. When the reader is competent, Genius is bright. We do not expect Waller to appreciate Milton. But, in general, he who understands himself is easily understood. "The man who is not intelligible, is not intelligent." A writer is clear, in proportion as he is

Jortin,
 Tracts, ii.
 529.

earnest. Passion, in Dryden, does the work of fancy in Spenser. The fire, which is under the thought, subdues and shapes it. Greek, on the lip of Demosthenes, is clay in the hand of Phidias. Strength is moulded in grace, and the grasp of Hercules softens into the turn of Antinous. It is not the giant who is deformed, but the monster.

IX.—UNITY OF PURPOSE NECESSARY
TO SUCCESS.

THE instinct of flight and the wings to uphold it are nearly useless, if one track be not clearly marked, and patiently followed. He runs uncertainly who has two goals. The flight becomes a flutter; the race,—a circle. Raffaello might lay down his pencil to build a cathedral; and L. da Vinci fill a page with a problem, and a

One object
to be kept
in view.

caricature. Some gifted adventurer is always failing round the world of art and science, to bring home costly merchandize from every port. But the warning truth still remains :

Opie,
Lecture i.

“ One science only will one genius fit :
So wide is art, so narrow human wit.”

No fact in ancient history is less disputable than its divisions. The Greek stage encouraged no Garrick to smile away pathos in farce. The maddened Orestes never disappeared in the mimic of the *Clouds*.

Examples
of partial
weakness.

The caution is wise : poet and hero are weak on one side. Milton's humour and Hobbes' poetry are among the saddest exhibitions of literature.

Bentley
and Demos-
thenes.

Bentley's hand forgot its cunning when he laid it on *Paradise Lost*. Longinus says, that as often as Demosthenes affected to be pleasant in a speech, he made himself ridiculous ; and if he happened to raise a laugh, it was chiefly upon himself. Dante showed an im-

perfect acquaintance with the capacities of Art, when he recommended the *Revelation of S. John* to Giotto, as a subject for the pencil. The enemies of Boileau beheld him shorn in an ode ; Corneille stumbled in comedy ; Sterne was beaten by his valet in learning Italian ; and a regimental schoolmaster might have taken down Marlborough in spelling. Instances of intellectual infirmity are seen admonishing the scholar upon every side. Some muscle, or nerve, of arm or of eye, is always weak. Pope tossed Theobald into the *Dunciad*, but he, clinging to the back of Shakespeare, out-ran his tormentor as an editor. The illustration of Temple is forcible as it is homely :—“ The abilities of man must fall short on one side or other, like too scanty a blanket when you are a-bed : if you pull it upon your shoulders, you leave your feet bare ; if you thrust it down upon

Boileau.

Corneille.

Works of
Bishop
Newton,
i. 23.Works,
iii. 459.

your feet, your shoulders are uncovered."

Q. Matfys ;
his deficiencies in
high art.

Art, not less eloquently than literature, teaches her children to venerate the single eye. Remember Matfys. His representations of miser-life are breathing. A forfeited bond twinkles in the hard smile. But follow him to an altar-piece. His Apostle has caught a stray tint from his usurer. Features of exquisite beauty are seen and loved ; but the old nature of avarice frets under the glow of devotion. Pathos staggers on the edge of farce. The sacred pictures of Matfys are the sermons of Sterne.

Fontenelle,
v. 421.

Talents which are to strike the eye of posterity should be concentrated. Rays, powerless while they are scattered, burn in a point. Great men have always one governing series of thoughts. We are not surprised to be told that a fly interested Malebranche more than all the Greek and

Roman history. Milton's confession about having only the use of his left hand in prose, is a text and a homily in Criticism.

Authors might reap a larger harvest if they would write books as the brothers Both painted landscapes, or as Rubens and Snyders sometimes worked together. Even the revision of friends often imparts a new lustre.

In this way Lucretius grew brighter under the pen of Cicero; the *Maxims* of Rochefoucault received the exquisite temper of their edge; the sharpest eyes in Port Royal picked out the overlooked weeds of Pascal, or gathered passages for his *Provincial Letters*; and the friendly solicitude of Secker disentangled the intricate argument of Butler.

Middleton's
Life of
Cicero,
iii. 320.

Pensées,
Seconde
Partie, ..
lxxviii.

Secker's
Works, by
Porteus,
i. xi.

X.—DIFFERENT SEASONS OF INTEL- LECTUAL MATURITY.

The mind
ripens at
various ages.

LORD BACON considered that invention in young men is livelier than in old, and that imaginations stream into their minds more divinely. He has not defined the boundary of youth. His own thirty-sixth year had come, when he committed to the press those golden meditations which he called *Essays*. But it is noticeable that his style opened into richer bloom with every added summer of thought. Later editions contain passages of beauty not found in the earlier; and his *Advancement of Learning*, published when he was forty-four, beams with the warmest lights of Fancy. His contemporary Hobbes was sixty-three before he put forth his evil claim to be remembered in the *Leviathan*. Sterne was forty-six when *Tristram* brought

Authors
whose chief
works
appeared
late. —
Hobbes and
Sterne.

London to his door, and furnished him with the boast that he was engaged to dinners fourteen deep. I turn to greater examples. Shakspeare concluded his dramatic life at forty-seven, with the charming story of the *Tempest*, of his Plays the most joyous and airy ; it is probable that Milton had reached the same age when he began the *Paradise Lost*. Why should the broad river become narrower while unnumbered springs continue to flow into it ? Raffaele died in his thirty-eighth year with his hand on the "Transfiguration ;" are we to look upon that picture as the mightiest effort of an art that could climb no higher ? Was there no fourth manner for the solemn light and stillness of riper manhood, which would have melted richer colours into his earlier drawing, speaking more fervently to the eye, without weakening his appeal to the affections ?

Close of
Shakspeare's
dramatic
life.

Raffaele's
last picture.

Ben Jonson
and Paul
Potter.

Akenfide's
Pleasures of
Imagina-
tion.

It is impossible to make absolute laws for the mind. It has seasons of warmth and beauty when the colour and flavour of its fruit are in perfection. But they are irregular; sometimes they come early. Ben Jonson wrote *Every Man in his Humour* at twenty-two; and Paul Potter dropped his pencil before he was twenty-nine. Occasionally the life of the intellect seems to run itself out in one effort. All the fine juice of the vine flows into a single grape. Zurbaran's early picture divided with Raffaele the applause of criticism in the Louvre. Akenfide, at twenty-three, had a lustre of invention which each succeeding year seems to have diminished. It might be that the scholar over-laid the poet; that the essence of his fancy was drawn off in the Laboratory; or that the torrent of youth brought down a few lumps of gold, and his mind had no rich

vein imbedded in it, for the full strength of manhood to work.

Sometimes the mind's flower un- Francia.

folds itself in the noon. Francia stood on the threshold of his fortieth year when a picture by Perugino made him a painter. In a few instances, it

keeps its choicest odours for the evening, or the night. Dryden was

nearly seventy when he completed his The bloom of Dryden's winter.

charming copies of Chaucer : a cripple, he tells us, in his limbs, but conscious of no decay in the faculties of his

soul, excepting that his memory was somewhat weaker, and to compensate for this loss he found his judgment

increased. "Thoughts come crowding in so fast upon me that the only Preface to Fables, Prose

difficulty is to choose or to reject." Works, by Malone, iv. 595.

M. Angelo had nearly reached the years of Dryden when he gave the "Last Judgment" to the world. The splendour of Titian shone most towards its setting ; his wonderful portrait of

The latest
works of
Titian.

Pope Paul the Third was painted at seventy-two, and his magnificent "Martyrdom of St. Lawrence" at eighty-one. Sixty-four summers only mellowed into ruddier tints the nosegay of Rubens; and Buffon assured a friend that after passing fifty years over his desk, he was every day learning to write.

Particular
periods of
intellectual
fruitfulness.

But though the times of fruit-bearing may vary in different minds, we generally find that several fine seasons follow each other in succession. Consider the five years of Milton's life, between 1634 and 1639, when he wrote *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *Arcades*, and his shorter poems; take the same period in the history of Shakspeare, beginning in 1606 with *Macbeth*, and ending, in 1611, with *Othello*; or cut off an equal length from the record of Jeremy Taylor's struggles and toils: see him contributing to his own and every age, between 1647 and 1652, the *Liberty*

Milton.

Shakspeare.

Taylor.

of Prophecy, the *Great Exemplar*, the *Holy Living and Dying*, and all his nobler sermons. These are golden chapters in the biography of Genius ; we are not to be surpris'd if some pages of weaker interest are found before or after them.

Walking in the fields during the last summer, I saw the sun—then going down in great glory,—suddenly cut in two by a strip of dark cloud, which, nevertheless, showed itself by the colour dimly shining through it, to be connected with that magnificent luminary ; and while I stood, the vapour melted, and the sun reappeared in all its large effulgence. My thoughts turned to the great lights which have been given to rule the intellectual day. I called to remembrance how the broad splendour of Genius, as it rolls along the sky of life, from the morning until the evening, has its little intervals of

The interrupted brightness of a great genius illustrated.

Frequently
the mind
regains its
heat, and
scatters the
shade.

shadow. The radiance of its manifestation is often broken. An inferior book or picture comes between the rising and the setting glory. A dark strip of cloud seems to cut the great light in the middle. It is a noble and comforting recollection that the gloom sometimes passes,—the mind breaks forth again, and the poet or the philosopher sinks behind the horizon of time, as he rose above it, in a full orb.

Genius,
early or late,
is beautiful
in its kind.

The light of the morning and the evening is equally beautiful, but it differs in tone and hue. So does the Imagination in the young and the old. Yet it may stream divinely into each. The tender green and the nightingale's breath belong to the spring ; the full rose and the red moon to the summer and the harvest. The portraitures of dreams upon the eyes under trees, the smiles of love, and the enchantments of hope, are the joy

Youth and
age, their
distinguish-
ing charms
of fancy.

and the heritage of youth ; the guardianship of angels, the victories of the soul, and the calm beauty of Paradise, are the illumination and the reward of manhood and of age.

XI.—THE INFLUENCE OF AIR AND SITUATION UPON THE THOUGHTS.

IT has been a subject of ingenious speculation if country or weather may be said to cherish or check intellectual growth. Jeremy Collier considered that the understanding needs a kind climate for its health, and that a reader of nice observation might ascertain from the book in what latitude, season, or circumstances, it had been written. The opponents are powerful. Reynolds ridiculed the notion of thoughts shooting forth with greater vigour at the summer solstice, or the equinox ; Johnson called it a fantastic foppery.

Essays, Pt.
ii. 36.

De l'Esprit
des Loix,
xiv. c. 2.

The atmospheric theory is as old as Homer. Its laureate is Montequieu. The more northerly you go, he said, the sterner the man grows. You must scorch a Muscovite to make him feel. Gray was a convert. One of the prose hints for his noble fragment of a didactic poem runs thus :—
“It is the proper work of education and government united to redress the faults that arise from the soil and air.”

Berkeley's
Works,
i. 19.

Berkeley entertained the same feeling. Writing to Pope from Leghorn, and alluding to some half-formed design he had heard him mention of visiting Italy, he continues :—“What might we not expect from a Muse that sings so well in the bleak climate of England, if she felt the same warm sun, and breathed the same air, with Virgil and Horace ?”

Dyer.

When Dyer attributes the faults of his *Fleece* to the Lincolnshire fens, he only awakes a smile. Keats wrote

his Ode to a nightingale—a poem full of the sweet south—at the foot of Highgate Hill. But we have the remark of Dryden—probably the result of his own experience,—that a cloudy day is able to alter the thoughts of a man ; and, generally, the air we breathe, and the objects we see, have a secret influence upon our imagination. Burke was certain that Milton composed *Il Penseroso* in the long resounding aisle of a mouldering cloister, or ivied abbey. He beheld its solemn gloom in the verse. The fine nerves of the mind are braced, and the strings of the harp are tuned, by different kinds of temperature. “I think,” Warburton remarked to Hurd, “you have often heard me say, that my delicious season is the autumn—the season which gives most life and vigour to my intellectual faculties. The light mists, or, as Milton calls them, the steams that rise from the fields in one of

Dedication
of Aureng-
zebe.

Letters, Sep.
22, 1769.

these mornings, give the same relief to the views that the blue of the plum gives to the appetite."

Mozart :
his love of
composing
out-of-
doors.

Chatterton.

Crabbe.

Mozart composed, whenever he had the opportunity, in the soft air of fine weather. His *Don Giovanni* and the *Requiem* were written in a bowl-ing-green and a garden. Chatterton found a full moon favourable to poetic invention, and he often sat up all night to enjoy its solemn shining. Winter-time was most agreeable to Crabbe. He delighted in a heavy fall of snow, and it was during a severe storm which blocked him within doors, that he portrayed the strange miseries of Sir Eustace Grey.

XII.—MENTAL DELIGHTS OF EARLY LIFE.

Books of
boyhood.

THERE is one pleasure of literature that fades almost as quickly as it blooms. I mean the intensity of

belief in what we read ; when turning our mind adrift upon a story, we glide, according to its will, by the side of overhanging gardens, or twilight depths of trees, until, being floated beyond the colours and sounds of common scenes and life, we find ourselves under

“ Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery-land forlorn.”

Keats' Ode
to a Night-
ingale.

Mr. Stewart thought that his relish for tales of wonder was as lively in the decline of his life as it had been in the beginning, and that he did not value the amusement which they afforded him the less, because his reason taught him to regard them as vehicles of entertainment, not as articles of faith. His explanation refutes itself. The sense of reality gives the charm. Introduce judgment, and the spell is broken. The undoubting mind which Collins bestowed upon Tasso is the characteristic only of the

Philoso-
phical
Essays, 548.

The delight
of the young
reader
springs out
of his faith.

great poet, or the youngest reader. Romance is the truth of imagination and boyhood. Homer's horses clear the world with a bound. The child's eye needs no horizon to its prospect.

Eastern
stories never
incredible to
the young.

An Oriental tale is not too vast. Pearls dropping from trees are only falling leaves in autumn. The palace that grew up in a night merely awakens a wish to live in it. The impossibilities of fifty years are the commonplaces of five.

Johnson's
admiration
of Bunyan.

What philosopher of the school-room, with the mental dowry of four summers, ever questions the power of the wand that opened the dark eyes of the beautiful Princess; or subtracts a single inch from the stride of seven leagues? The Giant-killer with the familiar name, has the boy's whole heart. And if Johnson, in anger, put down a little girl from his knee, who had never read *Pilgrim's Progress*, what a frown would he have

cast upon her whose tears of joy do not trickle over the Glass Slipper! Burke expresses the sentiments of many hearts :—" I despair of ever receiving the same degree of pleasure from the most exalted performances of genius, which I felt at that age from pieces which my present judgment regards as trifling and contemptible."

Burke
on the sym-
pathy of
childhood.

The first and the last days of life have, indeed, one sentiment in common. A book interests in proportion as it surprises us. When a friend entered the library of Gray, he found him absorbed in the newspaper. It contained the first letter of Junius. That venomous glitter of eye had the fascination of a discovery. Boccaccio, climbing by a ladder to the grass-grown loft of a monastery, to disinter a classic fragment from the dusty parchments, and Petrarch feasting his eyes on a *Quintilian*—just brought

Surprise, a
source of
pleasure to
readers of
all ages.

The artist
looking at
antiquities
and nature.

Later
pleasures of
literature are
fainter than
the earlier.

into daylight,—exhibit the sentiment in a more agreeable shape. The remark applies with equal truth to scenery, or any remains of antiquity : whether Raffaele lingers over the outline of a Greek head upon a medal, or Pouffin recognises some faintly-defined feature of a leaf, by which he may give its portrait with all the accuracy of a botanist. In each case the key to the delight is to be found in the surprise ; so far the boy and the sage read a book by the same light. But, however lively may be the enjoyment of taste unexpectedly gratified, it is weak in comparison with that vivid sense and glow of happiness and wonder, which quicken the pulse and brighten the eye of intelligent childhood. It finds its feeling unconsciously expressed by the poet, who spoke of his own rapture and amazement on first looking into Chapman's *Homer* :—

“Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
 Or like stout Cortes when, with eagle eyes,
 He stared at the Pacific—and all the men
 Look’d at each other with a wild surmise,—
 Silent upon a peak in Darien.”

The reader is surrounded by a new creation. The poem and the tale in youth are like Adam’s early walk in the Garden. In the beautiful words of Burke, “The senses are unworn and tender, and the whole frame is awake in every part.” The dew lies upon the grass. No smoke of busy life has darkened or stained the morning of our day. The pure light shines about us. If any little mist happen to rise, the sunbeam of hope catches and paints it. The cloudy weather melts in beauty, and the brightest smiles of the heart are born of its tears. A first book has some of the sweetness of a first love. The music of the soul passes into it. The unspotted eye illuminates it. Defects

The morn-
 of life; its
 sunshine and
 purity.

A book in
 youth com-
 pared to
 early love.

are unobserved ; sometimes they grow even pleasing from their connection with an object that is dear, like the oblique eye in the girl to whom the philosopher was attached. Later surprises will amuse, and deeper sympathies may cheer us, but the charm loses some of its freshness, and the tenderness some of its balm.

Descartes.

Why Virgil
had such
honour.

Perhaps the loving admiration of Virgil, in what are called the dark times of literature, may be explained on this principle. The dawn of civilization is the childhood of a people. The *Æneid* was the fairy tale, and Virgil was the enchanter of the middle ages. The revival of learning gave to it all the sparkle of surprise. A costly book was the home of a Magician.

How a poem
shone upon
the student
in the dark.

It cast rays from every page, as from a window. A scholar, winding out of mediæval ignorance, and coming suddenly upon one of these illuminated Palaces of Fancy, was not unlike a

way-farer, whose dismal road of snow and tempest brought him in the evening, full of joy and reverence, to the gate of a lighted Abbey.

XIII.—TASTE, ITS NATURE AND DELIGHTS.

LITERATURE has two eyes,—Taste and Criticism. Without these the book is cold and dark as the greenest landscape to a man who is blind. The best definition of Taste was given by the earliest editor of Spenser, who proved himself to possess any, when he called it a kind of *extempore judgment*. Burke's view was not dissimilar. He explained it to be an instinct which immediately awakes the emotion of pleasure or dislike. Akenfide is clear, as he is poetical, in the question:—

Taste and Criticism the eyesight of the mind.

Mr. Hughes.

Defined by Burke.

“What, then, is Taste but those internal powers, Active, and strong, and feelingly alive

Pleasures of Imagination, bk. iii. 523.

To each fine impulse ? a discerning sense
 Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust
 From things deformed, or disarranged, or gross,
 In species ? This nor gems, nor stores of gold,
 Nor purple state, nor culture, can bestow,
 But God alone, when first His sacred Hand
 Imprints the secret bias of the soul."

The beauties
 of books,
 pictures, and
 scenery in-
 stinctively
 felt and
 appreciated.

Instruction
 required to
 prepare the
 mind for
 Taste.

We may consider Taste, therefore, to be a settled habit of discerning faults and excellencies in a moment,—the mind's independent expression of approval or aversion. It is that faculty by which we discover and enjoy the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime in literature, art, and nature. It recognises a noble thought as a virtuous mind welcomes a pure sentiment, by an involuntary glow of satisfaction. But while the principle of perception is inherent in the soul, it requires a certain amount of knowledge to draw out and direct it. The uttermost ignorance has no curiosity. Captain Cook met with some savages who entirely disregarded his ship—the

first they had ever seen—as it failed by them.

Taste is not stationary. It grows every day, and is improved by cultivation, as a good temper is refined by religion. In its most advanced state it receives the title of Judgment. Hume quotes Fontenelle's ingenious distinction between the common watch that tells the hours, and the delicately-constructed one that marks the seconds and smallest differences of time. Rymer and Jortin may explain the two parts of the comparison. A pretence of sagacity does not alter the worth of the instrument applied. A watch may be common, although the face is gilded.

Taste, a growing endowment.

Essays, Moral and Political, iii. 6.

Rymer and Jortin illustrate the common and the fine watch of Fontenelle.

A taste, enriched by observation and learning, sensitive even to the tremble of the balance by which the scale is suspended, is probably one of the most desirable endowments of the mind. It enjoys some of the humbler

The value of Taste.

In some respects an inventor.

qualities of invention ; it brings a dim meaning into light, and not only beholds the image, or the argument, but gazes beyond them into the rudiments of their creation. It identifies itself with the author ; sees what he saw, and feels what he felt. It enters

The shadow
on the pic-
ture of Paul
Veronese.

readily into the reply of Paul Veronese to a person who asked him why some figures appeared in shade,—“ A cloud is passing over the sky, and darkens the picture.” Another example will show this power of Taste still more

The burning
of Borgho
Vecchio :
what Taste
discovers
in it.

clearly. In Raffaelle’s “ Burning of Borgho Vecchio,” the dresses of the people who carry water tofs in the wind ; an ordinary observer perceives nothing in the circumstance, but a finer sight learns from it that the conflagration is rising with the gale, and that the flames will conquer. These forward, inward, and backward looks are the motion and life of Taste. When that eye of the intellect is

closed, or injured, the majesty of Genius is obscured, or broken. Men of brightest thoughts, walking abroad in their books, are unknown by the multitude. The Muse who inspired them conceals, with a thick mist, their shape and features from the rude stare of the bystanders—as the Olympian Lady enveloped the Trojans in the palace of Dido—to dawn upon the friendly and purified eyes of reflective Taste, in the fresh bloom of beauty, and in the perfect gracefulness of form.

Men of Genius disregarded by their contemporaries, compared to the Trojans whom Venus covered with a cloud.

Molière might read a comedy to his old servant, and alter it according to the effect which it produced, but her opinion could be useful only in sketches of manners, or descriptions of vulgar feelings. Suppose that the grandest pictures of Dante or Æschylus had been exhibited, and her decision on their comparative merits desired;—the poet would have been a judge leaving his court to consult the

Molière's custom of consulting his servant inapplicable to works of refinement.

The shepherd who
supposed
Milton to
have failed
in rhyme.

Genius
sometimes
hidden from
the brightest
eyes.
Horace.

Daniel.

Walpole on
Thomson.

Crier on a question of law. There is a familiar story of a Scottish nobleman finding one of his shepherds in a field poring over *Paradise Lost*, and asking him what book he was reading, —“Please your lordship,” was the answer, “this is a very odd sort of an author; he would fain rhyme, but cannot get at it.” The shepherd might have understood Allan Ramsay; Milton was out of his reach. But not even to its own kindred has Genius been always revealed. Horace censured Plautus. The Library of Petrarch wanted the *Divine Comedy*, until Boccaccio sent it decorated with gold. Daniel, a contemporary of Spenser, and a versifier of much elegance, ridiculed the antique English of the *Faëry Queen*. Walpole sneered at Thomson, and Gray could satisfy himself with admitting the *Castle of Indolence* to contain “some good stanzas.” Hurd regretted that Milton

had not written of angels in rhyme ;
 Shenstone thought that Spenser might
 be enjoyed in a humorous light.
 Blackmore was the Homer of Locke. Locke.
 The critics of the Hôtel de Ram-
 bouillet, with Voiture at their head, Voiture.
 predicted the failure of Corneille ;
 and Patru, quite a leader of fashion Patru.
 in books, dissuaded Fontaine from
 writing fables.

Jealousy may often explain blind-
 ness. When Le Brun heard of the Envy a key
to misap-
prehension.
Le Brun
and Le
Sueur.
 death of Le Sueur, he said that he
 felt as if a thorn had just been taken
 out of his foot. Bellino warns Titian Bellino and
Titian.
 that he will never succeed in painting ;
 and Titian, crowned with fame, scowls
 upon the dawning honours of Tin-
 toretto. Pordenone, at Venice, kept Pordenone.
 a shield and dagger by his side. Not
 seldom the theologian, the poet, and
 the man of letters, display the same
 temper. Bossuet condemns the *Tele-* Bossuet on
Telema-
chus.
machus of Fénelon ; Corneille doubts

the dramatic powers of Racine ; and
 Voltaire and Le Sage. Voltaire smiles condescendingly at the
 humour of Le Sage.

XIV.—TASTE, AN INHERITANCE AND A FASHION.

TASTE has frequently an imaginary existence, unconnected with the intellect. It is merely hereditary or acquired, and descends from father to son with his prejudices and estate. The manor-house, the hounds, and Somerville, go together. Certain authors are adopted into families. Bunyan has the sacredness of a legacy ; the songs of Watts are bound up with earliest days at mothers' knees ; and Gray's *Elegy* incloses a domestic interior of warmth and affection in every stanza. There are hymns which have been intoned through the noses of three generations, and will probably reach a tenth, with all the music and

Some authors are admired on account of their affections.

Bunyan.

Watts.

Gray.

Popular hymns.

endearment of their ancestral twang.

In such cases the heart, not the understanding, is the source of interest, and admiration is only a pleasure of memory. The feeling of satisfaction arises from recollection.

Taste is often one of the aspects of Fashion. Folly borrows its mask, and walks out with Wisdom arm-in-arm. Like virtues of greater dignity, it is assumed. The furniture and decorations of a room are arranged to indicate the serious and graceful sentiments of the occupant. Bishop Sanderson looks gravely on Petrarch through his gold frame. Boccaccio sparkles over a grim treatise of Calvin, and a ruffle is smoothed in Aquinas. Love of books a fashion in many.

Addison sketched a student of this order, in whose library he found Locke Spectator, No. 37. *On the Understanding* with a paper of patches among the leaves, and all the classic authors—in wood, with bright backs. To such readers, a new book of which people talk is like a new

costume which a person of celebrity has introduced. It is the rage. Not to be acquainted with it is to be ill dressed. The pleasure is not of Literature, but of vanity. The pretended taste is a polite fraud of society.

Compared
to an epi-
demic.

Marino.
Gongora.
Cowley.

Anecdote
of Bishop
Butler.

Popular
aberration
of mind.

When a fashion of this kind happens to spread, it takes the character of a disease, raging and vanishing with the virulence and speed of an epidemic. Marino in Italy, Gongora in Spain, and Cowley in England, are varieties of the same type. Butler, sitting with his chaplain, as his habit was, in a deep reverie, suddenly started up, with the exclamation, "Surely whole bodies of men sometimes lose their wits as instantaneously as an individual does!" The Bishop's conjecture might very well illustrate the breaking out of a popular fever in things concerning Taste.

Epidemics of This, like other attacks of delirium,

is unmanageable while it lasts. Its taste always difficult of cure. will is absolute. Reynolds assured Northcote, that in the beginning of his own career the fame of Kneller Kneller and Vandyck. was so universal, that a connoisseur presuming to suggest a competitor in Vandyck, would have been laughed to scorn. Spence's criticism on the *Odyssey* was pronounced by persons of reputation to be superior to Addison's papers on Milton. It is pleasant to know that sooner or later the fever departs, and Taste recovers the tone of health. Sixty years ago we meet Want of discrimination. with *Rasselas*, *Telemachus*, *Cyrus*, and *Marcus Flaminius*, moving as equals in fortune and rank. The authors had passed their examination for honours, and were sent before the world in brackets. Time has changed their places in the calendar. Johnson and Johnson and Ramfey. Fénelon are household words, but who speaks of Sir Charles Ramfey, or Cornelia Knight?

A vulgar
error in
judgment.

De Staël.

Of Literature,
i. 317.

Æsthetic
and Miscellaneous
Works,
221.

Romeo and
Juliet under
two lights.

Introduction

Two other peculiarities may be noticed in the natural history of Taste. The first is the strong propensity in most people to make themselves and their views the measure of excellence. The scenical De Staël, always on the watch for a stage effect, complained that Spenser was the most tedious writer in the world. Nor is the error confined to individuals. It is national. A country grows its taste like its fruit. Germany and romance inspire Schlegel; England and good sense rule Mr. Hallam. Read and contrast those two characters of a famous tragedy. "Why," asks Schlegel, "does the Romeo of Shakspeare stand so far above all the other dramas of that poet, except that in the first delightful gush of youthful passion he deemed that work a fitting shrine for the outpouring of his emotion, with which the entire poem thus became filled and interpenetrated?" "It may

be said," observes Mr. Hallam, "that to Literature of Europe, ii. 393. few, if any, of his plays are more open to reasonable censure; and we are almost equally struck by its excellencies and its defects. The love of Romeo is that of the most bombastic commonplace of gallantry, and the young lady differs only in being one degree more mad." Were two voices ever heard more contrary or positive?

The second peculiarity resides in what may be characterized as the Taste of the Market. In an age of high civilisation, a publisher is a manufacturer. He supplies the demand, but rarely creates it.

Helvetius has an amusing story of De l'Esprit, P. 545. a person appearing before a tribunal and describing himself as a maker of books. The judge pleaded ignorance of his productions. "I quite believe you," answered the author, with tranquillity; "I write nothing for Paris. When my book is printed, I send the

edition to America. I only compose for the Colonies." He who addresses his own century, and flatters its caprices, will probably be as unknown in the next, as the scribbler for remote countries was in Paris.

XV.—A PURE AND CULTIVATED
TASTE SELDOM FOUND.

Works, iii.
268.

SHENSTONE said, that if the world were divided into one hundred parts, persons of original taste, educated by art, would only form a twentieth portion of the whole. Popular opinion is the old fable of the lion's great supper. The delicacies of the forest were spread before the guests; but the swine asked, "Have you no grains?" An entertaining French writer relates an experiment he made upon the musical feelings of animals. The spectator altogether unmoved was the one which outwardly had the

V. Marville,
Mélanges,
iii. 59.

most ear. He munched his thistles, and took no notice at all. Dryden was certain, if Virgil and Martial had stood for a county, that the epigrammatist would have carried the election; but he consoled himself by reflecting that in matters of Taste the applause of the mob is altogether worthless, and that not having lands of two pounds per annum in Parnassus, they are not privileged to poll.

Johnson enumerated three classes of literary judges:—(1.) Those who give their opinion from impulse and feeling; (2.) Those who measure a line or a paragraph by rules alone; (3.) And those who, being familiar with the laws of composition, and skilful in applying them, are independent of all. He advised an author to try and satisfy the third class, to esteem the first, but to despise and reject the second. His judgment is

Dryden's
opinion of
the multi-
tude of
readers.

The relative
value of
critical esti-
mates.

Of whom
the com-
mendation
is to be de-
sired.

upheld by distinguished authorities.

Analytical
Principles of
Taste,
p. 252.

“Whoever writes or acts by system,” is a remark of Payne Knight, “may stand a chance of being uniformly and invariably wrong.” That which pleases a refined and a reflective reader must be good, although the artillery of criticism be played upon it. The falling tear blots out Aristotle.

Bishop
Hurd’s
Works,
i. 390.

The most philosophical critic of the eighteenth century perceived that graceful and imaginative composition should be estimated chiefly by its impression upon the mind. Shaftesbury recommended an author to assemble the best forces of his wit, in order to make an assault on the territories of the heart. Reynolds spoke of taste as depending on those finer emotions which make the organization of the soul. Nor is a remark of Alison undeserving of remembrance, that the exercise of criticism always destroys for a time our sensibility to beauty,

Works,
i. 355.

Discourses,
i. 219.

Essays on
Taste, i.
101.

by leading us to regard the work in relation to certain laws of construction. The eye turns from the charms of Nature to fix itself upon the servile dexterity of Art.

The unconscious testimony of Gray Gray a witness. may be added. When he sent his Ode on the Progress of Poetry to Dr. Wharton, he requested him not to show it to mere scholars, who could scan the measures of Pindar, and say the *Scholia* by heart.

Literature is a garden, books are How much the pleasure of a reader is increased by his guide. particular views of it, and readers are visitors. Much of their pleasure depends on the guides. It is very important to obtain the assistance of those only who are familiar with the beauties they show, and able, from feeling and practice, to appreciate lights and shades and colours. Of this small band Gilpin is a remarkable Gilpin opens fresh beauties in Homer. instance. How happily he clears a

passage in the *Iliad*, which Learning had left in obscurity.

First Essay
on Pic-
turesque
Beauty,
p. 10.

Homer distinguishes Jupiter by a peculiarity of forehead; Gilpin shows us that the poet intended to portray the projecting brow, which casts a broad shadow over the eye. His interpretation is extremely picturesque, and may be compared with Spenser's description of the Dragon:—

Faëry
Queen, b. i.
c. 2.

“ But far within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glowing lamps were set, that made a
dreadful shade.”

Virgil's ar-
tistic eye.

Here is another example. Virgil paints a ship in full sail, and losing sight of the line of coast it is leaving:—

“ Protinus aërias Phæacum abscondimus arces.”

In the eyes of scholastic readers, “aërial” is only a synonyme for “tall.” But a receding object does not suggest merely elevation. Taste again

holds up its lamp. Gilpin conjectures that Virgil, who above all poets enjoyed the artistic eye, intending to indicate colour rather than shape, represented the towers bathed in that soft blue of distance, which gives the faint azure tinge to mountain scenery.

Gilpin points to the blue distance in the poet's description.

This delicacy of discrimination communicates a charm to the *Essays* of Uvedale Price, which will do more to form a true feeling for the beautiful than any single book in the English language. Twining is a younger member of the same family. One specimen will be interesting. Speaking of sounds, and the opportunities which they afford of descriptive imitation, he refers to Milton's "curfew,"

On the Picturesque, &c.

Twining.

Dissertations prefixed to Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry, p. 14.

"Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with fullen roar;"

and teaches us not to consider "swinging," as expressing only the

Milton's bell, peculiarity of its sound.

motion of the bell, but to feel that its swing is actually heard in its tone, "which is different from what it would be if the same bell were struck with the same force, but at rest."

Sensibility
not a cha-
racteristic of
comment-
ators.

The elegance of Gilpin, the graceful knowledge of Price, the sensibility of Twining, and the poetical refinement of the Wartons, are exceptions among commentators. A correction, or a note, is too often out of harmony with the passage explained or amended.

They some-
times re-
semble the
painter in
daring.

A glowing verse of Shakspeare becomes dreary in a moment. The fun goes in. We call to mind the presumption of C. Maratta, and the new sky he painted for the "Ganymede" of Titian, which chills the atmosphere, as if a block of frozen snow had tumbled into the picture.

Want of
Taste shown
in Warbur-
ton's treat-
ment of
Shakspeare.

It may be regretted, that large capacity and vigorous imagination are so seldom accompanied by Taste. The tender blossom of fancy faded

in the hard pressure of Warburton. He has become his own accuser in the annotation he wrote upon these two lines of Shakspeare :—

“ And cuckow-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight ;”

Love's La-
bour Lost.

a description so rural and easy, that we might have expected it to escape even the predatory pen of a commentator. But hear Warburton :—“ I would read thus,—‘ *Do paint the meadows much bedight, i. e. much bedecked and adorned*, as they are in spring-time.” Yet, if they are much bedight already, they do not require to be painted. The image has two fides. One looks to the eye; the other to the feelings. The emotional appeal is the more affecting. But Warburton runs his pen through it, forgetting how that tuneful friend, whom he delighted to honour, had lashed the conjecturing tribe ;—

Edwards,
Canons of
Criticism,
p. 20.

Dunciad,
b. iv.

“ Whose unwearied pains
Made Horace dull, and humbled Maro's strains.”

A complaint
respecting
Shaksperian
editors.

The grotesque look
of many
emenda-
tions.

Quarrels of
rivals some-
times provo-
cative of
merriment.

The real admirer of Shakspeare will hope that the last revision of his works has been inflicted. His poetry has been too long the orchard of editors, who leave disastrous proofs of their activity in trunks stripped of ivy, shattered boughs, and trampled enclosures. Some squalid article of intellectual dress, which they call an emendation, sticking among the rich fruit, proclaims the plunderer to have been up in the tree. It happens, indeed, that the sentiment of anger is occasionally softened by a sense of the ridiculous. One adventurer has no sooner packed up his little bundle of pillage, than he is waylaid by a fierce contemporary on the opposite side. Then begin the clamour, the reproach, and the struggle. Pamphlets are hurled ; satirical blows are showered ; the quarrel waxes furious :

“Collecti flores tunicis cecidere remissis.”

The assertion of Bacon, that the most corrected copies of an author are commonly the least correct, may advantageously be stamped as an introductory motto for every copy of Shakspeare.

Advance-
ment of
Learning,
p. 226.

XVI.—TASTE PUTS AN AUTHOR IN A PROPER LIGHT.

A GOOD reader is nearly as rare as a good writer. People bring their prejudices, whether friendly or adverse. They are lamp and spectacles, lighting and magnifying the page. It was a pleasant sarcasm of Selden, that the alchemist discovered his art in Virgil's golden bough, and the optician his science in the annals of Tacitus. When juries of Taste are thus empannelled, an author may fairly claim a right of challenge. Passion

Scarcity of
fit readers.

Table Talk,
p. 181.

Prejudice unfavourable to truth ; and self-love corrupt verdicts. What judge would Milton have been of Cowley's discourse upon Cromwell?

Calvin reading Servetus. Calvin, breathing flames and threats against Servetus, found a heresy in every line of his treatises. Trublet had a contemporary whose periods of contradiction came round in their order. To-day Corneille was despicable, to-morrow the prince of poets.

Essais sur Divers Sujets de Littérature, iii. 163.

Books and pictures demand a suitable light.

How Taste accommodates itself to the writer, and assists his descriptions with the imagination.

It is not enough for a reader to be unprejudiced. He should remember that a book is to be studied, as a picture is hung. Not only must a bad light be avoided, but a good one obtained. This Taste supplies. It puts a history, a tale, or a poem, in a just point of view, and there examines the execution. It causes the reader to forget himself; his own century vanishes. He goes out of the familiar into the heroic; rides with the Cid; laces the helmet of Surrey; and flings himself among the magnificent knights

of Taffo. His pulse beats with every impulse of delight and sorrow ; he braves the tempest with Lear, endures the picturesque torments of Dante, and sinks into delicious dreams in the *Castle of Indolence*. These are some of the pleasures of a poetical faith. The delights of a poetical faith. Every accomplished reader encourages it. In a theatre, a candle is the sun, and a painted cloth stands for Venice. The credulity of Taste gives the like help to the illusions of authors, and never sits down, in the same temper, to the wonders of Camoens and the statistics of M'Culloch.

If an architect were to fix a ladder against a cathedral window on a dull November day, and break up with sharp scrutiny the crimson dress and glory of the Saint, the artist's powers would disappear. Colour and expression are gone. The maker of the window never contemplated such an ordeal. A painted window ought not to be viewed from a ladder, but from the church.

The Faëry Queen compared to a window; the poet's moral to the sun.

He who disregards the object and character of a book, inflicts on its writer an equal wrong. Consider Spenser. He calls his *Faëry Queen* a perpetual allegory, or dark conceit. It should be read under the bright play of the moral, which is the sun to the window. In censuring the obscurity of the poem, we forget that its illumination is coloured. It is the lustre of a ruby, not a crystal. Each thought is tinged by the allegory into a hue of imagination, as the sun in the cathedral is dyed by the glass into stains of amethyst and emerald. The critic who decomposes a stanza into common sense, is the architect spelling out upon his ladder the wonders of the window, instead of gazing up to it from the dim choir, when summer or autumn lights bathe the faces and drapery from behind.

Charge of obscurity in Spenser ill-founded; his light is tinted.

Various rays on the window and the book.

No window gives all its splendours at once. It must be visited often.

A morning or afternoon gleam wakes a different tincture. Winckelmann wished to live with a work of art as a friend. The saying is true of pen and pencil. Fresh lustre shoots from Lycidas in a twentieth perusal. The portraits of Clarendon are mellowed by every year of reflection. The conjecture had only a poetical boldness, which supposed that a student might linger over Shakspeare—dwelling upon him line by line, and word by word,—until the mind, steeped in brilliancy, would almost scatter light in the dark.

The charm of reading Shakspeare with diligence and reflection.

Whoever has spent many days in the company of choice pictures, will remember the surprizes that often reward him. When the sun strikes an evening scene by Both, or Berghem, in a particular direction, the change is swift and dazzling. Every touch of the pencil begins to live. Buried figures arise; purple

A landscape suddenly illuminated by sunset.

Both and Berghem.

How trees and grass,

dressés and
figures,
seem to be
created.

robes look as if they had just been dyed; cattle start up from dusky corners; trunks of trees flicker with gold; leaves flutter in light; and a soft, shadowy gust—sun and breeze together—plays over the grass. But the charm is fleeting, as it is vivid. In a few minutes the sun sinks lower, or a cloud catches it: the scene melts—the figures grow dark, and the whole landscape faints and dies into coldness and gloom.

Momentary
flashes of the
mind falling
upon books.

Life has its gay, hopeful hours, which lend to the book a lustre, not less delightful than the accidents of sunshine shed upon the picture. Every mind is sometimes dull. The magician of the morning may be the beggar of the afternoon. Now the sky of thought is black and cheerless; presently it will be painted with beauty, or glowing with stars. Taste varies with temper and health. There are minutes when the song of Fletcher is

Taste sym-
pathises
with every
change of
feeling in
mind or
body.

not sweeter than Pomfret's. The reader must watch for the sunbeam. Elia puts this difficulty in a pleasant form, and shows us that our sympathy Essays, p. 223. with a writer is affected by the time, or the mood in which we become acquainted with him :—" In the five or six impatient minutes before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Faëry Queen* for a stopgap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons? Milton almost Not to send for Bishop Andrewes at dinner-time. requires a solemn service to be played before you enter upon him." Only a zealot in Political Economy begins Adam Smith before breakfast; and he must be fast growing benumbed in Adam Smith and Cudworth. Metaphysics, who wishes Cudworth to come in with the dessert.

A celebrated author is reported to have said, " I know not how it is, but all my philosophy in which I was so warmly engaged in the morning, appears like nonsense as soon as I have

Knox's
Essays,
lxxxii.

dined." Perhaps Ariosto selected an unpropitious hour, when he presented his *Orlando* to the Cardinal D'Este, and was startled by the inquiry of his Eminence, "Whence he had gathered such a heap of fooleries?"

The reader
admonished
by these
examples.

The man of taste, therefore, will choose his book, so far as he may, according to the season and his own disposition at the moment; waiting for the rays that occasionally dart from it, in some happy transparency and warmth of the mind, as the lover of pictures looks for the flush of sunset on the canvas. By degrees he comes to know that every writer makes a certain demand upon his reader. This is emphatically true of those inquiries, or consolations, which concern the soul. That ancient Master, who always rose from his knees to his pencil, suggests the tone of mind. The serenity of Wordsworth's grandest verse is not for him who receives a box of twenty new

Contempla-
tive books
especially
need seasons
of tran-
quillity.

Words-
worth.

volumes every week; but for the serious, musing man, who sits at his own door, and, "like the pear that overhangs his head from the green wall, feeds in the sunshine."

XVII.—BOOKS WHICH ARE ADAPTED
TO DIFFERENT SEASONS.

JOHNSON at dinner sometimes kept Johnson.
a book in his lap, wrapped up in a
corner of the table-cloth; and Ham- Hammond.
mond always took one of these mute
friends to cheer his walks. Southey Southey.
divided them into three classes; one
for the table, a second for the fields,
and a third for the coach. A closely-
printed volume, full of texts, which
the mind worked into sermons, was
the favourite for a journey. The
Colloquies of Erasmus stood him "in Erasmus
good stead" for more than one ex- and More
cursion; and the *Utopia* of Sir Tho- good com-
pany in a
coach.

mas More was found serviceable for another.

A classification of authors to suit all hours and weathers might be amusing. Ariosto spans a wet afternoon like a rainbow. North winds and fleet agree with Junius. The visionary tombs of Dante glimmer into awfuller perspective by moonlight. Crabbe is never so pleasing as on the hot shingle, when we can look up from his verses at the sleepy sea, and count the

The Borough, Letter xxiii.

“Crimson weeds, which spreading flow,
Or lie like pictures on the sand below :
With all those bright red pebbles, that the fun
Through the small waves so softly shines upon.”

Reading for the evening.

Some books come in with lamps, and curtains, and fresh logs. An evening in late autumn, when there is no moon, and the boughs toss like foam raking its way back down a pebbly shore, is just the time for *Undine*. A

Undine.

voyage is read with deepest interest in winter, while the hail dashes against the window. Southey speaks of this delight:—

“ 'Tis pleasant by the cheerful hearth to hear
Of tempests and the dangers of the deep,
And pause at times, and feel that we are safe ;
And with an eager and suspended soul,
Woo terror to delight us.”

Southey's
praise of
voyages read
in stormy
weather.

The fobs of the storm are musical
chimes for a ghost-story, or one of
those fearful tales with which the
blind fiddler in *Redgauntlet* made “the
auld carlines shake on the fettle, and
the bits of bairns skirl on their minnies
out frae their beds.”

Legends of
mystery.

Shakspeare is always most welcome
at the chimney-corner : so is Gold-
smith : who does not wish Dr. Prim-
rose to call in the evening, and Olivia
to preside at the urn ? Elia affirms
that there is no such thing as reading,
or writing, but by a candle ; he is
confident that Milton composed the

Shakspeare.

The Vicar
of Wake-
field an
acceptable
guest.

Mr. Rogers
in Human
Life.

morning hymn of Eden with a clear fire burning in the room ; and in Taylor's gorgeous description of sunrise he found the smell of the lamp quite overpowering. A living poet has charmingly sketched a family group enjoying the evening pleasures of literature,—

“ At night when all assembling round the fire,
Closer and closer draw till they retire,
A tale is told of India or Japan,
Of merchants from Golcond or Astracan,
What time wild Nature revell'd unrestrain'd,
And Sinbad voyaged, and the Caliphs
reigned ; —
Of Knight renowned from holy Palestine,
And Minstrels, such as swept the lyre divine,
When Blondel came, and Richard in his Cell
Heard, as he lay, the song he knew so well : —
Of some Norwegian, while the icy gale
Rings in her shrouds, and beats her iron sail,
Among the shining Alps of Polar seas
Immoveable — for ever there to freeze !
And now to Venice—to a bridge, a square,
Glittering with lights — all nations masking
there,

With light reflected on the tremulous tide,
 Where gondolas in gay confusion glide,
 Answering the jest, the song on every side."

But Elia carried his fireside theory too far. Some people have tried "the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens and sultry arbours," without finding their task of love to be unlearnt. Indeed, many books belong to sunshine, and should be read out-of-doors. Clover, violets, and hedge-roses, breathe from their leaves; they are most loveable in cool lanes, along field-paths, or upon stiles overhung by hawthorn; while the black-bird pipes, and the nightingale bathes its brown feathers in the twilight copse. In such haunts it is soothing to wander with Thomson, Bloomfield, or Clare in the hand,

Some books
 are most
 agreeable in
 the open air.

"till declining day
 Through the green trellis shoots a crimson ray."

Thomson,
 Bloomfield,
 and Clare,
 pleasant
 companions
 in field-
 paths and
 under trees.

The sensation is heightened when
 an author is read amid the scenery, or

the manners, which he describes; as
 Reading a Barrow studied the sermons of Chry-
 book where toftom in his own fee of Conftan-
 it was writ- tinople. What dailies sprinkle the
 ten. walks of Cowper if we take his *Task*
 The *Task*, for a companion through the lanes of
 and Mil- Wefton! Under the thick hedges of
 ton's Lyrics. Horton, darkening either bank of the
 field in the September moonlight, *Il*
Penferofo is ftill more penfive. And
 whoever would feel at his heart the
 deep pathos of Collins's lamentation
 for Thomfon, muft murmur it to
 The banks of the Thames at Richmond.
 Collins on Thomfon. himfelf, as he glides upon the steal-
 ing wave, by the breezy lawns and
 elms of Richmond,—

“ When Thames in fummer wreaths is drest,
 And oft fufpend the dafhing oar,
 To bid his gentle fpirit reft.”

XVIII.—DILIGENCE THE HANDMAID OF TASTE.

WHETHER a book be read from the oak lectern of a college library, in the parlour window, or beneath the trees of summer, no fruit will be gathered unless the thoughts are steadily given up to the perusal. Attention makes the genius; all learning, fancy, and science, depend upon it. Newton traced back his discoveries to its unwearied employment. It builds bridges, opens new worlds, and heals diseases; without it, Taste is useless, and the beauties of literature are unobserved; as the rarest flowers bloom in vain, if the eye be not fixed upon the bed.

Patience indispensable to mental improvement.

Attention, its character;

Newton eulogised it; what wonders it works.

Condillac enforces this habit of patience by an apt similitude. He supposes a traveller to arrive in the dark,

The uses of Attention set forth in a parable.

at a castle which commands large views of the surrounding scenery. If at sunrise the shutters be unclosed for a moment, and then fastened, he catches a glimpse of the landscape, but no object is clearly seen or remembered — all wavers in a confusion of light and shade. If, on the contrary, the windows be kept open, the visitor receives and retains a strong impression of the woods, fields, and villages, that are spread before his eyes.

The parable explained and applied. The application of the comparison is obvious. Every noble book is a stronghold of the mind, built upon some high place of contemplation, and overlooking wide tracts of intellectual country. The unacquainted reader may be the traveller coming in the dark; sunrise will represent the dawn of his comprehension; and a drowsy indifference is explained by the closing of the windows. In whatever degree this languor of observa-

tion is broken, gleams will shine in upon the mind. But the shutters must be fastened back. The judgment and the memory are required in their fulness to irradiate the subject, before the mental prospect stretching over the page can appear in its length, and breadth, and beauty.

Attention is not often the talent of early life. For this cause, the exquisite verses of Virgil which are read in schools excite little, if any, interest and delight. Generally wanting in the young.

It was remarked by a most accomplished person, the late Mr. Davison, that the *Principia* of Newton or the doctrine of Fluxions may be understood by a youth of eighteen; but that the *Iliad*, the *Epistles* of Horace, or the *History* of Clarendon, can never be embraced, until repeated efforts on the part of the reader himself shall have conducted him to that point of view, Mathematical lessons more easily received than those of poetry and history.

in which the writers contemplated their own works.

Peirefc's
manner of
reading.

There is one variety of attention, which the humblest student may acquire. Gassendi informs us that Peirefc always underlined any difficult passage, that he might return to it at a convenient season. Wyttenbach men-

Ruhnken.

tions the same practice in Ruhnken.

Leibnitz.

Leibnitz made extracts, wrote his opinion upon them, and then cast the papers aside. Having engraved the picture on his memory, he destroyed the plate. The advice of a scholar, whose piles of learning were set on fire by Imagination, is never to be forgotten:

Time to be
divided be-
tween books
and medita-
tion.

Proportion an hour's reflection to an hour's reading, and so dispirit the book into the student. Nor is the following caution less happy than it is

The advan-
tages of fort-
ing our in-
formation.

quaint:—" Marshal thy notions into a handsome method. One will carry twice as much weight, trussed and

packed up in bundles, than when it lies untoward, flapping and hanging about his shoulders."

XIX. — TASTE SELECTS A FEW
AUTHORS FOR FRIENDS.

LAMB prided himself on being able to read anything which in his heart he felt to be a book. He had no antipathies. Shaftesbury was not too genteel, nor Fielding too familiar. Pope confessed his own miscellaneous amusements in letters; knocking at any door, as the storm drove. Montaigne and Locke were alike to him. The example is dangerous. A diffusive student is almost certain to fall into bad company. Homes of entertainment, scientific and romantic, are always open to a man who is trying to escape from his thoughts. But a shelter from the tempest is dearly

Miscellaneous reading.

Not to be encouraged.

Contagion
of bad
books.

bought in the house of the plague. Ten minutes with a French novel, or a German rationalist, have sent a reader away with a fever for life.

The greatest
authors not
always to be
studied.

At the first glance, all study might seem to be wasted which is not devoted to the greatest writer in each particular branch of knowledge; but consideration shows the bold attempt to be useless. Such exertion of mind

Mental
effort in-
jurious.

is too much for its strength. A scholar of the average capacity reading an author of the sublimest, is a man of the common size going up a hill with a giant: every step is a strain; the easy walk of the one is the full speed of the other. Frequent intervals of

Hours of
relaxation
to be inter-
posed.

rest are needed. He must come down from the high argument into the plain. Over a dozen pages of Bloomfield he recovers from the fatigue of a morning's journey with Dante; and a sermon of Blair gives him breath for another climb with Hooker.

We may generalise Ben Jonson's Ben Jonson on imitation. advice to a poet about the choice of a master, to be honoured and followed until he grows very He. It is The choice of a master, as shown in the practice of celebrated authors. certainly better to set up one great light in a room, than to make it twinkle with a dozen tapers. Dante had his Virgil; Corneille his Lucan; Barrow his Chrysofom; Bossuet his Homer; Chatham his Demosthenes, in Chatham and Demosthenes. a translation; Gray his Spenser. It is a remark of Warburton that Burke Burke and Bolingbroke. never wrote so well as when he imitated Bolingbroke. Tonson, the book-feller, seldom called upon Addison Addison and Bayle. without finding Bayle's *Dictionary* on the table. And in our own times, Lamb assured Mr. Cary, that Coleridge Coleridge and Collins. fed himself on Collins. "I guess good house-keeping," was the saying of Fuller, "not by the number of chimneys, but by the smoke." Ben Jonson's exhortation, therefore, may be received, but only in a large and liberal

The reader,
like the
author, is
to preserve
his inde-
pendence.

spirit. Reverence is not to be debased into superstition. Choose an old field, and work in it; but never sink into the serf of the proprietor. Be the lord, while you are the tiller, of the ground. Recollect the warning of Pliny, and bind a laurel upon the plough.

XX.—CRITICISM, ITS CURIOSITIES AND RESEARCHES.

What rela-
tion it bears
to Taste.

Has its
limits of
investigation
not to be
overpassed.

CRITICISM is Taste put into action. A true criticism is the elegant expression of a just judgment. It includes Taste, of which it is the exponent and the supplement. The frame of Genius, with its intricate construction and mysterious economy, is the subject of its study. The finest nerve of sensation may not be overlooked. But Criticism must never be sharpened into anatomy. The delicate veins of Fancy may be traced,

and the rich blood that gives bloom and health to the complexion of thought be resolved into its elements. Stop there. The life of the imagination, as of the body, disappears when we pursue it. Many pleasures and some advantages of literature are bound up in the name of Criticism. Its history would be the annals of the mind. An acquaintance with it is scarcely less necessary to the student than the alphabet of antiquities is to the traveller. The *Divine Comedy* should have its hand-book, as well as the Coliseum. Criticism is introduced in this discourse only as it relates to the intellectual gratification of readers, and the examples offered are merely short aids to reflection.

It is connected with all the emotions of the student.

One interesting feature of Criticism is seen in the ease with which it discovers what Addison called the specific quality of an author. In Livy, it will be the manner of telling

The physiognomy of books to be observed.

Livy.

Sallust. the story ; in Sallust, personal identification with the character ; in Tacitus, the analysis of the deed into its motive. If the same test be applied to painters, it will find the prominent faculty of Correggio to be manifested in harmony of effect ; of Poussin, in the sentiment of his landscapes ; and of Raffaele, in the general comprehension of his subject.

Homer's
poverty
indicated in
his verses.

Virgil's
rank dis-
coverable in
the same
manner.

A single thread guides the critical eye through a labyrinth of character. It infers the lowly station, as it might prove the ancientness of Homer from internal evidence. He tells us what a thing cost. Some pages of the *Iliad* are a priced catalogue. In the style of Virgil the intimation of rank is equally plain. He retreats from all contact with poverty. In the herdsman's hut, or under a tree with a shepherd, he has the air of a person of quality, unbending into simplicity and bucolics. He receives a maple

cup from a peasant with the grace of a courtier, who is thinking all the time upon the last *amphora* which Mecænas opened.

We have a proof of this penetration in the history of Crabbe. Lord Jeffrey had remarked of his similes that, ingenious and elaborate as they are, they seemed to be the thoughtful productions of a busy and watchful fancy, rather than the spontaneous growth of a heated imagination. The poet admitted the conjecture to be well founded : — “ Jeffrey is quite right ; my usual method has been to think of such illustrations, and insert them after finishing a tale.”

A modern instance taken from Crabbe.

Jeffrey.

An agreeable function of Criticism is exercised in the recognition of a picture, or a book, by some distinctive expression which is ascertained to belong to a particular workman. A connoisseur lays his hand on Mieris without hesitation. He carries the

How pictures and books may be assigned to their makers.

catalogue in his eye down a gallery. He spells Rembrandt in shadows, and the deep purple of a distance prepares him for Pouffin.

Little things
establish
identity.

Titian.
Tintoretto.

Wouver-
man.

Domeni-
chino.

N. Berghem.

Hobbema.

Rubens.

The
Madonna of
Raffaello,
one face
varied.

The most original genius has a favourite formula. In Titian it is a crimson cap; in Tintoretto, the lowering face of a Moor; in Wouverman, a white horse; in Domenichino, an angel; in N. Berghem, a woman riding on an ass; in Hobbema, the dewy lustre of trees. Even amid the inexhaustible fruitfulness of Rubens, Reynolds recognised one smooth, flat face, continually recurring. Every "Madonna" of Raffaello is descended from the same type. The high, smooth, round forehead, with the thin hair, reappears in each change of posture and expression. The Dutch artist is the most striking instance of all. Under his hand, the river of Eden is a canal; and he builds Babylon upon piles.

Authors afford equal opportunities to critical discernment. A phrase, or an epithet in a book, is a particular hue, or shade, of a picture. It identifies the writer. We know a Chaucer, as we know a Van Eyck.

The rule applied to books.

St. Paul uses one word twenty-six times, and it occurs in no other part of the New Testament, except in the Parable of the Sower. South is discovered immediately by the lash of a sentence, and Andrewes by the mechanism of his exposition. A costly Latinism encircles the gold of Taylor; and the rising incense of devotion—sweeter than any odours of poetry,—assures a reader that he is bending over a homily of Leighton.

A chapter of St. Paul authenticated by a word. South.

Pope wished to have translated Homer in Asia, with present life to enlighten the past. In our days, he might have brought all Persia to his lawn. The printing-press has made Criticism a citizen of every kingdom.

Leighton.

Criticism transports us over the world.

How the
spuriousness
of a poem
can be de-
monstrated.

Mitford,
Life of
Parnell, 56.

It is naturalised in antiquity. It talks with Aristotle, and lives with Cuvier. Every harvest-field of learning is to be gleaned. No fragment of information is without a value. If a colour and a word establish the relationship of a picture and a book, a single fact in natural history may suffice to disprove it. Take a simple instance. The *Batrachomyomachia* was long circulated with the Homeric poems ; but Criticism is prepared to pronounce it spurious, from finding in it a reference to the cock. That bird is not mentioned in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, and is supposed to have been a stranger in Greece, until the soldiers of Alexander brought home the jungle-fowl of India, and domesticated it in Europe.

XXI.—CRITICISM VIEWED IN ITS JUDICIAL CHARACTER.

CRITICISM has more dignified duties and nobler pleasures than these. It is the protector of the unfriended, and the avenger of the smitten. Newton found that a star, examined through a glass tarnished by smoke, was diminished into a speck of light. But no smoke ever breathed so thick a mist as envy or detraction. If Milton had come to us in the judgment of Waller, his original brightness would have sunk into a glimmer. Inferior talents suffer less in their degree. Southey spoke of Flecknoe as far from being the despicable scribbler, whom Dryden pelted with such contumely; and Johnson desired to see the collected works of that Dennis, who is beheld by most people bespattered and raving in the pillory of Pope.

It watches
over the
weak and
the un-
fortunate.

Smoke and
envy
diminish a
star and a
reputation.

Flecknoe.

Dennis.

Mallet's
visit to
Pope.
The *Essay*
on Man.

We may learn from the poet what perils are encountered by merit. He published his *Essay on Man* without his name. Mallet, a noisy contractor of literary all-work, called at Twickenham soon after its appearance. Pope, who delighted to do everything by stratagem, inquired the news of books. His visitor informed him that the latest publication was something about Man: that he had glanced at it, but detecting the incompetency of the writer, soon tossed it aside. Pope, with exquisite cruelty, told him the secret.

Reflections
suggested by
the story.

Pope might sit in his grotto, and amuse himself with inventing new tortures for the purgatory of Dunces: his fame and his fortune were sure. But suppose the author of the *Essay* to have been a genius struggling up the hill—a Chatterton with a Walpole for a patron,—that pert falsehood of Mallet might have

overfet all his hopes. How often has fuch a catastrophè befallen the worthieft adventurer ! Putting to fea with his firft freight, the enemy—in the ftrong image of Jeremy Collier—has fired the beacons, drawn down the poſſe at his landing, and charged him while he was staggering on the beach.

In fuch caſes Criticiſm appears like ſome goddeſs in Homeric warfare—awful, yet ſweet. Infulted intellect is crowned after its death. The eloquent panegyric is a chamber where the author lies in ſtate. The ſcorn and anguiſh of a life are recompens'd by the magnificence of the mourning. A beautiful colour ſeems to bathe the ſleeper from the over-hanging canopy. Theſe funeral rites ſhould be reſerved for the Princes of Learning. Criticiſm bribed by the affections, by paſſion, or by intereſt, ſometimes arrays the uſurper in the trappings of royalty. Flattery fits at the head

Genius
cruſhed in
the begin-
of its career.

How the
admiration
of Taſte
embelliſhes
the names
of the
departed.

The crowns
of the
panegyric to
be cautiously
beſtowed.

with its crown and sceptre, while the bier is emblazoned with escutcheons. But rank in literature is neither inherited nor bestowed. If the soul of Genius did not animate the author, his collapsed reputation is only lifted up like the body of Arvalan in Eastern story. The motion comes from the tread of the bearers, as the powerless, bloodless frame, sways to and fro with its own ungoverned and corrupting weight.

Kehama.

XXII.—CRITICISM OPENS FRESH
SPRINGS OF ENJOYMENT.

AN artist once objected to a living painter, that he could never tell where in nature he found those gorgeous hues, which seem to inflame his landscapes, and shower purple and crimson over the field or the river. The ear of society caught up the reply,—
“I dare say that you never see such

Appearance,
of nature
never
uniform.

colours ; but do you not wish that you could ? ”

One of the lessons of criticism is the folly of making our own knowledge a standard of probability. Consider the bone of a reptile in the hand of a ploughman, and of Owen.

The common observer notices only one hue of green, while the cultivated eye perceives a grey tint in the sun's reflexion on leaves and grass. An Abyssinian traveller saw in the Bay of Tajoura the azure and gold of the most extravagant picture ; and Mrs. Houftoun speaks of the autumn foliage in American woods as bewildering the describer by its dazzling varieties.

“ If a painter were to endeavour to depict them to life, he would be called as mad as Turner.” A testimony yet more extraordinary is heard in Colonel Mitchell's exploring expedition into the interior of Tropical Australia. One day his path conducted him into

Mr. Burnet's
Notes on
Reynolds.

Tints of
American
forests more
astonishing
than Mr.
Turner's.

Scenery in
Australia
compared to
the romantic
combina-
tions of
Martin.

a valley so sublimely grotesque that he called it "Salvator Rosa." A river was surrounded by hills, of which some took the shape of cathedrals in ruins, and others of decayed fortifications. The comparison that the scene suggested to the visitor was a sepia landscape of Martin.

The lesson
in literature
which these
facts supply.

Poetical images—which are the lights and landscapes of fancy—claim the benefit of these illustrations. There are deep recesses of feeling in the heart of Genius, which are not less marvellous to the common reader, than the Australian vale was to the traveller. What is unknown is not impossible. Disbelief of things because they are contrary to our experience is fatal to entertainment and to truth, both in literature and in morals.

Results of
unbelief.

A passage
from
Thomson
criticised.

A trifling circumstance occurs to me in Thomson's account of the Dorsetshire Downs, where he speaks

of their woody slopes dipping into shadow, the broad patches of corn-land, and enormous flocks scattered over uninhabited tracts of country—these he calls “white.” But the epithet was an accommodation of truth to poetical custom; when he composed the *Seasons*, the sheep of Dorset were usually washed with red ochre. Suppose that he had preserved this local peculiarity, and have written,—

Colour of
sheep.

“Pure Dorsetian downs

The boundless prospect spread, here shagged with
woods,

There rich with harvests, and there *red* with
sheep;”

the whole array of town critics would have been in arms, impatient for the assault, yet certain of defeat. The amplest knowledge has the largest faith. Ignorance is always incredulous. Tell an English cottager that the belfries of Swedish churches are crimson, and his own white steeple furnishes him with a contradiction.

Probability
of the Poet's
having been
censured for
his truth.

XXIII.—CRITICISM, IN EDUCATING TASTE, WEAKENS BIGOTRY.

CRITICISM checks all claims to infallibility in Genius. Literature has its superstitions and its intolerance.

Payne
Knight.

An acute scholar remarked that there is not an anomaly of grammar, or metre, in Milton, which has not been

An error of
Raffaelle
pointed out.

praised as a beauty. Raffaelle is injured by the same idolatry. Look at the miraculous "Draught of Fishes."

What a boat! Richardson saw in it only the choice of a lesser evil, and wonderful skill in overcoming it; but Opie has proved that the resources of art might easily have subdued the difficulty without offence to the judgment.

Shakspeare,
a signal
example.

What is true of Raffaelle's commentators in one instance, is true of Shakspeare's in fifty; in the eyes of his worshippers the idol is faultless.

Martin
Sherlock,

An ingenious writer compared his

poetry to St. Peter's at Rome, and recommended the reader of the drama Letters from a Traveller, 1780.

—like the visitor in the church,—when displeased by a spot to take a step further, and gaze upon a beauty.

The advice is good, if the blemish be not vaunted as a charm. There ought to be some strong shades between the devotee and the heretic. The mean of praise between two extremes.

We have authors in morocco who would not be recognised by their contemporaries—they are so bedizened with dress, and spangled with flattery.

Much of this exaggerated praise may be resolved into self-love. The critic, like the traveller, scrawls his name upon a Pyramid. Jones lives with Cheops; Drake with Shakspeare. An attempt to account for some excesses of adulation. Drake.

It was an observation of Pope, that poets, who are always afraid of envy, have quite as much reason to be alarmed at admiration. He looked upon Shakspeare as writing to the people without views of reputation, Applause, one of the perils of success.

Preface
to his
Edition of
Shakspeare.

and having, at his first appearance,
“no other aim in his writings than
to procure a subsistence;” or, as he
puts the opinion in his poignant
verse,—

Imitations
of Horace.

“Shakspeare (whom you and every play-house
bill
Style the divine, the matchless, what you will)
For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight,
And grew immortal in his own despite.”

Shak-
speare's
object in
writing
considered.

Shakspeare himself confirms Pope's
estimate of his character. He made
his fortune, and forgot his plays.
Having created a home and a treasure,
he threw away the wand. It had
done its work in sending him to
Stratford. We may find a profitable
moral in Goldsmith's amusing com-
plaint that he was regarded as a
partizan, when his only object was to
write a book that would sell.

A reason
given for his
beauties and
faults.

A deep reverence for the Poet may
be combined with the liveliest sense of
his weakness and false taste. His

magnificent images, his loving wisdom, and his noble sentiments, were the beamings of that sun-like mind which shone over the whole world of nature and fancy ; they were inseparably his own. His mock-fights, his artificial thunder, his quibbles and grossness, were chiefly outward accidents of situation and circumstances. They were so many fragments from his festival of imagination and humour, scornfully flung to stay the hunger of the Pit.

Why should Shakspeare escape the common lot ? Works of Genius must be imperfect. Irregularity is a law of their existence and splendour. Brilliancy, twilight, and shadow, are so many inequalities of surface along a body essentially luminous. Criticism, which does not observe the gloom, is like an imperfect telescope that discovers no spots in the sun. The true observer admits the polemical flatness

Weaknesses
inseparable
from the
mightiest
author.

of *Paradise Lost*, and the overloading
 The Night- Watch of Rembrandt, sombreness of Rembrandt's "Night-
 Watch." The low comedy of Da-
 mætas and Mopsa displeases his ear
 and the Arcadia of Sidney, in the *Arcadia* of Sidney, and he
 wishes to shade away the deep lamp-
 black in the "Transfiguration" of
 Spenser and S. Rosa; His love of Spenser does
 their want of keeping to be not reconcile his eye to a woodman
 observed. in Lincoln green during the enchanted
 reign of Arthur; and he thinks that
 S. Rosa might have selected a fitter
 decoration than a cannon for the tent
 of Holofernes.

XXIV.—CRITICISM THE CENTRE OF MANY LINES.

Criticism
 like a river
 from which
 streams flow
 in several
 directions. EVERY river branches into nu-
 merous little streamlets—pleasant to
 the eye and the ear,—that lose them-
 selves in green meadows, or among the
 pebbles of village-brooks. Criticism,
 pursuing its course through the fruitful

country of Learning, detaches from its current many small tributaries, of which each draws a continual supply from the father-stream. Of these some have been already enumerated. It will be sufficient to insert two more upon our map : (1) the art of emendation, and (2) the tracking of authors along their secret paths of study.

The first demands the union of many talents. Porson adjusting the text of Euripides, is the architect restoring a palace. The pursuit of Genius into its treasure-house is an inferior, but a more interesting accomplishment. It is one which all readers may share, and which deserves to be called a pleasure, if not an object and advantage, of literature. The need of it is the greater, as memories are often weak. Addison copied into the *Spectator*, from an Italian ethical work of the sixteenth century, a story about a mirror and a lady, but omitted

Two of
these
specified.

The Greek
scholar's art
of emenda-
tion.
Porson.

Eastlake,
Literature of
the Fine
Arts, 350.

What
makes an
imitation.

to state its foreign descent. The occupation is to be enjoyed with caution. A coincidence is not a robbery. The most agreeable of all satirists has playfully exhibited a clever curiosity gone astray, in the portrait of a scholar who reads all books :—

Pope's
caricature of
a literary
busy-body.

“ And all he reads assails,
From Dryden's *Fables* down to Dufey's tales ;
With him most authors steal their works—not
buy :
Garth did not write his own *Dispensary*.”

Swift's
definition
stated and
enlarged.

Swift seems to indicate the fair distinction between the theft of the scribbler and the loan of the author, by saying that the lighting a candle at a neighbour's fire does not affect our property in the wick and flame. Milton held a torch to Ovid, and Taylor to Chrysostom. But both carried materials for burning. The ignible substance belonged to themselves.

Authors are
sometimes

Some imitation is involuntary and

unconscious. No mighty intellect can possibly be lost. The ocean of time only covers to reproduce it. There is nothing in the poet, or the philosopher,

unintentional
plagiarists.

“ But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.”

Plato dies in the school to appear in the pulpit. The mind of Genius is nourished from within and without.

Philosophy
melts into
Theology.
Plato.

Its food is self-grown and gathered.

It resembles a tree which absorbs into its root the juices of the soil, and influences of the air, but draws from its own sap the strength which swells the trunk, and shoots forth leaves and branches.

The tree,
a symbol of
the intellect
in its nourishment
and growth.

This discourse scarcely presumes to speak of Criticism, as it now lives and flourishes. Much, however, of the pleasure of literature arises out of its skilful exercise. If there be in it little of the splenetic heart of a former century, there is abundance of un-

Some deficiencies of
modern criticism
particularized, and
remedies proposed.

timely fruit, and confident foreheads. Its defects are twofold,—a want of modesty, and a want of knowledge. A remedy for the former is to be found in the removal of the latter. The truest critic, like the deepest philosopher, will produce his opinions as doubts. Only the astrologer and the empyric never fail.

Imperfect
models the
occasion of
mediocrity
and false
taste.

English
classics
neglected.

A thoughtful person is struck by the despotic teaching of the modern school. The decisions of the eighteenth century are reversed; the authority of the judges is ignored. Addison's chair is filled by Hazlitt; a German mist intercepts Hurd. Our classical writers daily recede further from the public eye. Milton is visited like a monument. The scholarly hand alone brushes the dust from Dryden. The result is unhappy. Critics and readers, by a sort of necessity, refer every production of the mind to a modern standard. The age weighs

itself. One dwarf is measured by another. The fanciful lyrist looks tall, when Pindar is put out of sight. This is like boarding up Westminster Abbey, and all the Cathedrals, and then deciding on the merits of a church by comparing it with the newest Gothic design that, sent too soon to the roadside, implores of every passer-by the charity of a steeple.

The ill-effects of this practice shown in a simile.

XXV.—POETRY, ITS SHAPES AND BEAUTIES.

THE Temple of Fame contains no sepulchres so beautified by love as those of the poets. Their memory is bound up with the histories of kings and nobles. Davenant sets forth, in musical prose, some of the rare achievements of minstrelsy. A tyrant lived with the praise and died with the blessing of Greece, for gathering the

Preface to Gondibert, p. 30, 1651.

Exploits of the poets.

duft of Homer into an urn ; Thebes was preferved by the harp of Pindar ; the elder Scipio lay in the bofom of Ennius ; Lælius was flattered by the rumour of his helping Terence ; Virgil brightened the purple of an Emperor ; and the Capitol fhouted for Petrarch.

Poetry the
blossom of
all beauty.

Poetry deferves the honours it obtains as the eldeft offspring of Literature, and the faireft. It is the fruitfulness of many plants growing into one flower, and fowing itfelf over the world in fhapes of beauty and colour, which differ with the foil that receives and the fun that ripens the feed. In Perfia, it comes up the rofe of Hafiz ; in England, the many-blossomed tree of Shakſpeare.

Invention a
kind of
creation.

Poetry is the making of thought. He who finds, creates. The Poet ſummons ſhadows into the cryſtal of memory, as the Charmer, in old times, peopled his glaſs with faces

of the absent. Mirrors of magic may represent the inventions of the minstrel. The Phantasy of the Greeks, the Vision of the Latins, and the Imagination of ourselves, signify the same work of the mind, *the causing to appear*.

Imagination is the union of likenesses, and their exhibition in new forms. It is composed of several conceptions folded into each other. For example,—The memory entertains an idea of a palace; Imagination embellishes it with splendid apartments, or encircles it with gilded pinnacles and delightful gardens. The strange animal of the traveller bristles into the Dragon of Spenser. The Helen of Zeuxis was the blended harmony and bloom of a five-fold loveliness; and the Hercules of Glycon was the ennobled symmetry of his most athletic contemporaries. Raffaello and Guido professed to have their model in-

Imagination
and concep-
tion; how
related to
each other.

Examples in
verse and
art.

Zeuxis.

Glycon.

Guido.

shrined in one certain Idea of beauty ;
yet it was not created in the mind.
The features of life, in its purest
developments, were spiritualized by
Imagination. A common face is
thrown upon the glass, and the sun
brightens it. The smallest seed may

The Jove of
Phidias.

contain the flower. The Greek
sculptor never saw Jupiter, but he
had gazed upon heroes. Milton
walked in a garden before he planted
Eden.

Pandemo-
nium.

In this way the most exquisite com-
binations of the Poet are traced back
to their beginnings ; whether Milton
dazzles us with the flash of unnum-
bered swords in his dark Consistory ;

A goddess in
the Æneid.

or Virgil shows Minerva shouting to
the Greeks in the flames of Troy ;

The Geru-
falemme.
Shelley.

or Tasso illuminates the hill-top with
the feet of an angel ; or Shelley
compares life to a dome of glass
which—

“ Stains the white radiance of Eternity.”

In each case the writer had something to work upon. The outline lay upon his recollection. The visible led him to the unseen. The conception opened into the image.

If we divide Poetry into Classic and Romantic, the former will be found to delight most the taste and the heart ; the latter, the imagination and the senses. A flowing outline of calm dignity marks the Parthenon and *Samson Agonistes*. Broken shadows, mystery and awe, endear an old Gothic house and a canto of Spenser. The enchanted forest of Tasso casts a dreadfuller shade over the thoughts than the grove of Lucan. Warton supposes a reader to be more impressed by the black plumes on the helmet in *Otranto*, and the gigantic arm on the great staircase, than by any paintings of Ovid or Apuleius.

Poetry appeals to different emotions, and touches the feelings, or the taste.

Essay on Pope, i. 382.

By whatever name the beautiful in thought may be distinguished—Classic

The Beautiful under every form

is hailed by
the refined
reader.

or Gothic, descriptive or philosophical—the lover of fancy welcomes it. He drinks at every fountain of taste. In each colour and bend of the wide landscape he discovers something to admire: the cloud-capt battlements and flashing standards of the Epic; the dim mountain heights of the Contemplative; the sunny slope of the Pastoral; or the heaving turf of the Elegiac. Whatever is lovely and of good report is within reach of his sympathy. He turns from the humour of Chaucer to the dreams of Collins; as he feels opposite emotions roused and gratified by the Woodman of Gainsborough and the Saint of Francia.

An Epic
poem
described.

In a true Epic he admires the palace of the Muse. Each book is a state-room full of portraits of princes and heroes. Long lines of historic ancestors and splendid achievements rise to his memory. He reads Homer with

something of the sentiment with which he visits Windsor. Reflective poetry Poetry of contemplation. exerts its power in a different manner. The palace moulders into the cathedral. Tombs replace the ancestral pictures; the cloister is the royal chamber; and Death breathes the kingly consecration of Time.

Gay's scenes sometimes invite him. Sir Hudibras talks Babylonian; Gilpin's postchaise takes him up for Edmonton; or Pope introduces him to a Conversation-piece, sparkling as Hudibras, c. i. 93. Pope compared to Watteau. Watteau's. Perhaps the breeze streams over flowers upon his book, while he sits in the grotto with Arbuthnot and Swift; and then the ripe fruit and the warm shade of the garden-wall tempt his footsteps; he follows the green path that winds up the embowered page of Thomson; or, Thomson. if his mood be idler, he gathers a few sonnets, the hedge-flowers of fancy,

Parnell. and dreams over a stanza of Parnell and Shenstone.

Some pleasures of fancy indicated.

The advantages of Poetry are many, as its delights are common. It makes dark weather fair, and blue skies bluer. The dismaldest day—a giant of clouds—sinks before it. Not only Shakspeare and Milton bear the sling. The oaten pipe hurls stones at a sad temper. The fatal pebble may be taken from a village brook. The insolent Philistine, who lords it over a noble spirit, is frequently vanquished and plundered by one of a ruddy countenance, coming from the country and the sheepfold.

Low spirits often raised by rural pictures.

It is worth observing how much our out-of-door pleasures are heightened by the poets. Nature,

Collins,
Ode to
Simplicity.

“By all her blooms and mingled murmurs dear,”
is brought closer to the heart. Her charms are doubled. The fields look

greener ; brighter people walk among
 the corn. Wordsworth gilds the
 forest arches with the equipage of
 Olympus ; Spenser touches the mossy
 roots of old beeches into sunshine
 with the angel-face of Una ; Shak-
 speare sprinkles moonbeams to

The Poet's
light of
Nature.

“ Tip with silver all the fruit-tree tops ;”

Southey,—

“ Mottles with mazy shade the orchard slope ;”

and Bloomfield gathers the white
 clouds to rest, in the evening sky, like
 a flock of sheep with the shepherd.

Farmer's
Boy ;
Winter.

Poetry in general resembles a field-
 path which the whole village may
 walk upon. Most of its beauties
 are unenclosed. But here and there
 a choice tree or a fine glimpse of
 scenery is shut in. Only a learned
 taste may open the gate and show the
 grounds. Akenfide, Collins, Gray,
 and T. Warton are examples of this
 kind. The principle of their style is

Some
writers re-
quire highly-
educated
readers.

Their style
defined ;
it is artificial.

two-fold; embracing,—1. The construction of a language differing from that of society; and 2. The decoration and arrangement of it, according to the laws of design and colour. The first object is sought by blending foreign idioms with those of home; and the second by disposing the thoughts to captivate and dazzle the eye.

It is obvious that the gratification which such productions afford lies beyond the sentiment, or the description, and is independent of either. A Greek or a Latin phrase, suddenly encountered, is like a sketch of a ruin, or a costume in a traveller's note-book. It carries the mind back into the scenery and customs of ancient people. "By these means," it has been elegantly observed, "the genius of the poet, instead of leading, seems only to accompany us into the regions of his beautiful creations, while the activity of the fancy mul-

Mr. Mitford.
Works of
Gray, ii.
xxxvii.

tiplies into a thousand forms the image it has received ; and the memory, gathering up the most distant associations, furrounds the poet with a lustre not his own." A wise man will try to understand before he condemns it.

These are the enclosed beauties of Poetry—sheltered garden-beds of curious flowers,—not to be judged by comparison with the open landscape, but to be visited and enjoyed for their own particular charms. There can be no uniformity of excellence. Each style of invention—poetic, architectural, artistic, or musical,—has its own laws, and demands a trial which shall be based upon them. Marino and Cowley would not call Petrarch and Wordsworth as witnesses to character. Ariosto demurs to a summing-up of Quintilian. Julio Romano represents the Hours feeding the ethereal Horses of the Sun ; Landseer takes his

Reasons for
not under-
valuing such
productions.

An illus-
tration from
Julio Ro-
mano and
Landseer.

palfrey from the meadow to prance with cavalier or lady in the green array of the olden time. What then? Have we one measure for the most poetical and the truest of Painters? Must the allegoric and the real be thrown into the same scale?

Wilkie and
P. Veronese.
The natural
and the
ornamental.

Look at the argument in another way. Hang Wilkie's "Rent-Day" and a picture of P. Veronese together. We are contrasting an interior in Goldsmith's Auburn with Milton's grandest compositions from Mythology. In one, the elements of interest are few and simple—the old furniture, the weeping woman, the hard broker; nothing speaks to the imagination, or the taste: the appeal is to the heart. In the other, the materials of impression are many and costly—sculptured columns, sumptuous trains of servants, the plume and stateliness of war. The heart is untouched; all strikes the eye, and is

addressed to it. Bring the beggar from the street, and he has a pulse and a tear for Wilkie ; but call the scholar from his prints and statues, to appreciate the grace and dignity of Verona. The accomplished reader tries to unite the feelings of sympathy and of taste. He acknowledges each to be a master, and admires both if he can.

XXVI.—VERSIFICATION, THE CHARM OF SOUND.

HITHERTO we have been considering those delights which Poetry supplies to the mind. But it has other attractions. Next to its language is the tone of its voice. It makes love to the ear, and wins it with music. Certain passages possess a beauty altogether unconnected with their meaning. The reader is conscious of a strange, dreamy sense of enjoyment, as of lying upon warm grass in a June even-

How the
mind is
reached
through the
ear.

Essay on
Pope's
Odyssey,
Evening v.

James
Mont-
gomery,
Lectures,
p. 83.

Blank verse:
its capabili-
ties shown
by Shak-
speare and
Milton.

ing, while a brook tinkles over stones in the glimmer of trees. Sidney records the effect of the old ballad on himself; and Spence informs us that he never repeated particular lines of delicate modulation without a sort of shiver in his blood, not to be expressed. How deep is the magic of sound may be learned by breaking some sweet verses into prose. The operation has been compared to gathering dew-drops, which shine like jewels upon the flower, but run into water in the hand. The elements remain, but the sparkle is gone.

Of all the measures in which Imagination takes its pastime, the heroic line of Milton and Shakspeare is the most rich and various. It is full of opportunities. Every colour and shade play on its broken surface. No gleam of fun is lost. Its broad mirror gives space for the magnificence of imagery, and the long-drawn pomp of

description; for the snowy piles of alabaster, where the chief of the angelic guard kept watch near the Eastern gate of Eden, his shield and sword “hung high with diamond flaming;” and for the bark of the Egyptian, with its silken sails and painted fans, gliding on its own shadow of gold along the glassy Cydnus.

Paradise
Lost,
bk. iv. 543.

Antony and
Cleopatra.

Milton played on his metre like his organ. He brings out with a daring finger every grand and various note, sometimes—with wonderful effect—striking a momentary crash of discord into the full swell of the music. He disregards syllables. A poet, not unworthy to criticise him, quotes the verses in which Death threatens Satan at the gates of Hell,—

Is a musical
instrument
of volume
and
sweetness.

Mr. James
Mont-
gomery.

“Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive! and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy lingering—or, with one stroke of this dart,
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt
before;”

and remarks, "The hand of a master is felt through every movement of this sentence, especially towards the close, where it seems to grapple with the throat of the reader; the hard, *staccato* stops, that well-nigh take the breath, in attempting to pronounce 'or, with one stroke of this dart,' are followed by an explosion of sound in the last line like a heavy discharge of artillery."

A refinement of verification specified.

Shenstone found his ear always pleased by the introduction of words —like *watry*—which, consisting of two syllables, have the fulness of three. The employment of spondees, with the melody of dactyles, is another secret of Milton's versification. If Shakspeare be studied with equal attention, the whole power and compass of the English language will be understood. Perhaps it is susceptible of no inflection of harmony, not even the low thrill of the flageolet, which

is not brought out in passionate or familiar tones.

The rhyming couplet may claim the second rank. Dryden is the Master who took the tinkle from the chime, by his artful and various pauses. At once majestic and easy, with the warble of the flute and the trumpet-peal, he fills and entrances the ear. The mellifluence of Pope, as Johnson called it, has the defect of monotony. Exquisite in the sweet rising and falling of its cadence, it seldom or never takes the ear prisoner by a musical surprise. If Pope be the nightingale of our verse, he displays none of the irregular and unexpected gush of the songster. He has no variations. The tune is delicate, but not natural. It reminds us of a bird, all over brilliant, which pipes its one lay in a golden cage, and has forgotten the green wood in the luxury of con-

The heroic
line of
Dryden.

Distin-
guished from
Pope.

Likened to
a bird in
captivity.

Dryden is
always easy.

finement. But Dryden's versification has the freedom and the freshness of the fields. Running through his noblest harmonies, we catch, at intervals, that rude sweetness of a Scottish air which he himself heard in Chaucer. This is a great charm. He preserved the simple, unpremeditated graces of the earlier couplet, its confluence and monosyllabic close, while he added a dignity and a splendour unknown before. Pope's modulation is of the ear; Dryden's, of the subject. He has a different tone for Iphigenia slumbering under trees, by the fountain side; for the startled knight, who listens to strange sounds within the glooms of the wood; and for the courtly Beauty to whom he wafted a compliment.

Fables.
Story from
Boccaccio.

Theodore
and Hono-
ria.

Verbes to
Duchess of
Ormond,
prefixed
to Palamon
and Arcite.
The Spen-
serian
stanza, its
harmony
and com-
pact.

The stanza, to which Spenser has given a name, combines some of the advantages of the blank verse with

the graces of the rhymed. Dryden confessed his obligations to a concord of sound for helping him to a thought, and some of the most elaborate delineations of Spenser appear to have grown out of the necessities of his metre. Warton instances the binding of *Furor* by Guyon:—

“ With hundred iron chains he did him bind,
 And hundred knots, which did him fore
 constrain;
 Yet his great iron teeth he still did grind,
 And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in
 vain :
His burning eyes, whom bloody streaks did stain,
Stared full wide, and threw forth sparks of
fire ;
 And more for rank despight, than for great
 pain,
Shakt his long locks coloured like copper wire,
 And bit his tawny beard to show his raging
 ire.”

Instance of
the suggest-
iveness of
rhyme.

But for the tyranny of rhyme, we might have wanted the vivid circum-
 stances of the fifth, sixth, and eighth

Pictorial
effects.

The characteristic of the measure is delicacy and grace.

lines. The stanza, in Spenser's hand, is equal to any Rembrandt-effect of shadow, or fear. Never did the armour of a knight glitter more solemnly in the dark, or a red thunderbolt tear up the ground with a fiercer plunge, than in his verse. But its nature is gentler and more funny. Its home is on the lips of love, when May throws flowers from her lap, or with the dreaming Enchantress, whose warm tresses are sprinkled by ambrosia;

“on either hand upswells
The gold-fringed pillow lightly preft.”

Then all the hidden melody of its soul comes forth. Listen to the description of the abode of Sleep:—

Soothing description of Repose.

“And more to lull him in his slumbers soft,
A trickling stream from high rocks tumbling
downe,
And ever-drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mix'd with a murmuring wind much like the
fowne

Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne :
 No other noise, nor people's troublous cries
 As still are wont t' annoy the wallèd towne,
 Might there be heard ; but careles Quiet lies,
 Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies."

A writer, who has thrown many pleasant lights upon poetry, reminds us that in reading this stanza we ought to humour it with a corresponding tone of voice, lowering or deepening it, "as though we were going to bed ourselves, or thinking of the rainy night that had lulled us." He suggests that attention to the accent and pause in the last line will make us feel the depth and distance of the scene. This sense of remote loneliness forms a delightful peculiarity of Spenser at all seasons. A thousand miles of dark trees seem to rustle between the world and the poet. Mr. Coleridge points out the imaginative absence of space and time in the *Faëry Queen*. The haunted region

Mr. Leigh
 Hunt, *Imagination and
 Fancy*,
 p. 87.

Literary
 Remains,
 l. 94.

has no boundary—the reader goes with the poet, as the Waking Beauty followed the conquering Prince :—

Mr. Tennyson's Poems,
p. 317.

“ Across the hills and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day.”

The reader
of the Faëry
Queen re-
sembles the
Lady in
the Sleeping
Palace.

His eyes are in a trance, delicious as that which held the maid, the page, and the peacock, when a sudden breeze swept through the garden, and all the clocks of that marvellous house struck together. He is in Dream-land, without the wish or the power to ask, or to learn, how he came, or when he is to depart. If a faint murmur from the dim world of life break on the calm, some sweet symphony of the silver-sounding instruments soon renews the spell,—

“ A most melodious sound
Of all that might delight a dainty ear,
Such as, at once, might not on living ground,
Save in this paradise, be heard elsewhere.”

Defects of
the stanza.

The picturesque of versification

shares the inconveniences of the picturesque in building; dark windows and winding galleries perplex the footstep; obscure similes and intricate epithets entangle the attention. The defects of the Spenserian stanza are classed under three heads: (1.) Dilation of circumstances, however insignificant; (2.) Repetition of words; (3.) The introduction of puerile or unbecoming thoughts to complete the rhyme. For the most part the skill of the poet overcomes the difficulties. His nimble hand ranges over the keys and brings the harshest notes into concord. Occasionally, however, lines are rebellious. A stanza turns upon him, but he encounters it with a resolution which reminded an ingenious critic of Hercules, breaking the back of the Nemean lion. He dislocates the tender nerves of a metaphor with a merciless grasp; alters, lengthens, or cuts away words and

T. Warton,
Observations on the
Faëry
Queen,
i. 159.

Spenser's
manner of
subduing
refractory
rhymes.

His elisions.

letters. Language is his kingdom, and he rules it like a despot.

General
merits of
the stanza.

After every abatement, the stanza itself remains unequalled for breadth, richness, and sound. It is marked, moreover, by a romantic wildness, which is singularly appropriate to the visionary temper of the poem. The lingering, dying fall of the closing Alexandrine suits well the antique style, and the serious light of the verse. As the music rolls down the shadowy canto, which the cloud of allegory and the beams of fancy fill with a balmy twilight, we recall to our memory the anthem in a gorgeous chapel, when it sweeps along the branching roof, and trembles round the decorated pinnacles, and sighs among the glimmering stone-work and the fading canopies, until every pillar and leaf are

Recalls the
solemn
strains heard
in cathedral
worship.

Words-
worth, Ec-
clesiastical

“ Kiffed

By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife.”

It would be like reckoning up the notes of the wood in spring, to dwell upon the pleasures afforded to the ear by that linked sweetness, which gives the title of "lyrical" to the dancing numbers of Cowley, and the buoyant Masques of Milton and Jon-
Sonnets, xliv. Lyric measures, their number and music. Masques.

son; while the laboured efforts of their genius are honoured and surveyed, the gayer language of fancy is ever on the tongue. *Paradise Lost* is laid up in cedar; but *L'Allegro* is a household word.

It was a saying of Shenstone, and experience confirms it, that the lines of poetry, the periods of prose, and even the texts of Scripture most frequently recollected and quoted, are those which are felt to be pre-eminently musical. The simplest rhythm is the softest, and the most familiar is the dearest. New forms disturb the ear by disappointing it. Perhaps the innovations of Horace may help to
Our recollection of poetry greatly depends upon its modulation. Why no memorials

XXVII.—SATIRE EXCLUDED FROM POETRY.

When Sa-
tire becomes
poetical.

THE Satirist is only related to the Poet when he beautifies the exhibition of real life with the lights of fancy, and ennobles invective into allegory ; when he puts the crown upon some martyr of Learning, or immortalises a moral malefactor in fire. But as the outburst of passion, disappointment, or rivalry, Satire is banished from the family of Song. Literature loves the good-will and peace she teaches. Quarrels in verse, or in prose, never gain her protection.

Churchill. The abuse of Churchill melts with the winter snow. Even the mightiest word-combatants draw few eyes to the story of their struggles ; the fierce controversy of Milton has left no deeper traces behind it, than the feet of a Greek wrestler upon the sand of the arena.

Viewed in its happiest form, as a work of art, Satire has one defect which seems to be incurable—*its uniformity of censure*. Bitterness scarcely admits those fine transitions, which make the harmony of a composition. *Aqua fortis* bites a plate all over alike. The satirist is met by the difficulty of the etcher. But he wants his opportunities of conquering it. The graver may lend emphasis to the needle. The pen has no ally. The necessary balance of effect can only be given by a different hand. A satire should be interpolated by a philosopher, and the gnomic wisdom of Jackson be stamped upon Pope.

Analogy between a Satire and an Etching.

The graver and the needle.

XXVIII.—THE DRAMA, ITS CHARACTER AND ENTERTAINMENT.

DRYDEN defined a play to be a just and lively image of human nature.

On Dramatic Poësy, Prose Works, ii. 43.

Notes on
Art of
Poetry.
Works,
i. 105.

Bishop
Percy on
the teaching
of the Stage.

The Greek
Dramatist.

ture, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind. Hurd expands the view. Man is so constructed, that whatever his condition may be—whether pleasurable or painful—the Imagination is continually presenting to the mind numberless varieties of pictures, conformable to his situation. These images are shaped and tinged by the circumstances of birth, feeling, and employment. The exhibition of them is the Poetry, and a just representation is the Art of dramatic writing. Supposing this outline to be earnestly filled up, the Stage would become a school of virtue, and Tragedy, in the words of Percy, be a supplement to the Pulpit.

And this, according to his light, was the character of the Greek dramatist. He instructed and entertained. His page was solemnised by wisdom.

It was such a style that Milton included among the evening amusements of his Thoughtful Man :

“ Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops’ line,
Or the tale of Troy divine ;
Or what—though rare,—of later age
Ennobled bath the buskin’d stage.”

Il Penferoso.

The choice of subject, not more than its treatment, gave an educational tone to old Tragedy. The writer selected the grandest features of national story. It is found that a spectator is affected by the rank and remoteness of the sufferer. Belifarius asking for an obolus is more touching than a blind sailor who lost his sight before the mast. Hurd puts this feeling with force : “ The fall of a cottage by the accidents of time and weather is almost unheeded, while the ruins of a tower which the neighbourhood hath gazed at for ages with

Dignity and remoteness heighten impression. Belifarius.

Critical Dis-
sertations,
Works,
ii. 36.

admiration, strikes all observers with concern."

Theatres
are popular
libraries.

A play in
Java.

Earl's
Eastern Seas,
p. 103.

The Drama is the book of the people. In all countries the circumstances of a life, however rudely displayed, possess an incomparable attraction. The story-teller is the play-wright of Constantinople. The adventures of an ancient Javanese prince will hold a native assembly from evening until daylight. Yet the properties consist only of a transparent screen, with a large lamp behind it, and a hundred painted puppets, twelve inches high, cut out of buffalo-hide. The poetry is a monotonous recitative, and the action is confined to throwing the shadow of each successive figure upon the curtain. A dramatic poet wields the sceptre of the masses; he reaches the national heart through all its organs of sensation. Eye and ear are his ministers. A brave exploit is riveted in the

audience. A fine saying grows into an argument. When a moral purpose animates the author, he works it through the play. The commonest burlesque submits to the oversight of conscience.

The Drama embraces and applies all the beauties and decorations of Poetry. The Sister arts attend and adorn it. Spenser's lovely portraiture of Venus finding Diana in the wood—

“ While all her nymphs did, like a garland,
her enclose,”—

is vividly descriptive of the honours and services which are rendered to the Muse of Tragedy. Painting, Architecture, and Music, are her handmaids. The costliest lights of a people's intellect burn at her Show. All ages welcome her. An eloquent admirer has indicated this universal influence. He points to the king, the statesman, and the foldier, gathered before her to watch the anatomy of the passions;

Embellish-
ments of
theatrical
compo-
sitions.

Painting.
Archi-
tecture.
Music.

A. W.
Schlegel,
Dramatic
Art, p. 41.

to the artist, combining the splendour of costume and variety of characters into gorgeous processions of his own; to the old, living over early days in recollection; and to the young, waiting with eager eyes and beating heart for the first ruffle of the curtain, which is to discover, with each rising fold, a new world of scenery, magnificence, and life.

XXVIII.—COMEDY AND FARCE : THEIR INFIRMITIES.

Ecclesiastes,
ii. 2.
Proverbs,
xiv. 13.

THE Preacher tells us that laughter is mad, and the Proverb of the Wise Man adds a warning that the end of mirth is heaviness. There was a deep moral in the Athenian law which interdicted a judge of the Areopagus from writing a comedy. The habit of looking at things on the ludicrous side is always hurtful to the moral feelings. The pleasure is faint and vanishing,

Injurious
consequences of
encouraging
Farce.

and leaves behind it an apprehension of disgrace. Raffaele and Hogarth, Hogarth. *Comus* and the *Tale of a Tub*, are cut Swift. afunder by a broad gulf.

No other element of literature is so Wit quickly loses its flavour. susceptible and volatile as Wit. It comes in and goes out with the moon; when most flourishing, it has its boundaries, from which, as Swift said, it may not wander, upon peril of being lost. This geographical chain has bound, with heavier or slighter links, the pleasantry of Lucian, the buffoonery of Rabelais, the pictures of Rabelais. Dryden, and the caricatures of Butler. Butler. The urbane pleasantry of Horace alone preserves its freedom, and travels over the world.

Humour, which is the pensiveness Humour more lasting. of Wit, enjoys a longer and a wider life. After one brilliant explosion, the repartee is worthless. The shrunken firework offends the eye; but the quiet suggestiveness of Mr. Shandy Mr. Shandy flourishes.

Rambler,
No. clvi.

Tragi-
comedy of
Shakspeare.

is interesting as ever ; the details of the great army in Flanders will last as long as the passage of Hannibal. The pleasure of Shakspeare's comedies rises from their Humour. His smile is serious. Johnson commended tragi-comedy, as giving a true reflection of those grave and trifling incidents which compose the scenes of experience. Joy and grief are never far apart. In the same street, the shutters of one house are closed, while the curtains of the next are brushed by shadows of the dance. A wedding party returns from church, and a funeral winds to its door. The smiles and the sadnesses of life are the tragi-comedy of Shakspeare. Gaiety and sighs brighten and dim the mirror he holds. In this respect he differs from his contemporary Ben Jonson, in whom is enjoyed, in its perfection, the comedy of erudition. The *Alchemist*, the *Silent Woman*, and *Every Man*

in his *Humour*, are master-pieces of a learned pencil. Fletcher may be relished in his *Elder Brother*, and Maffinger in his incomparable Sir Giles Overreach. New Way to pay Old Debts.

If the reader descends from the reigns of Elizabeth and James into the time of the second Charles, his gratifications of mirth are purchased by a wounded conscience. Comedy has no whole place in its body. Greek farce was riotous and insolent ; yet fancy—like a summer breeze from a green farm—sometimes refreshes the hot stage. Aristophanes paints town-life with a suburb of gardens. Corruptions of English comedy in the seven-teenth century. A blade of grass never grew in the theatre of Farquhar and his kindred. Aristophanes. Wide was their scholarship in wit :— Farquhar.

“ They saunter’d Europe round,
And gather’d every vice on Christian ground.”

They cast nets over the old world Erudition in vice.
and the new. No venomous epigram,

The results
of dramatic
amusements
considered.

Cowley's
opinion
applied.

Shakspeare
compara-
tively pure.

or sparkling idiom of sin, escaped the throw. Every line glitters and stings. Upon the whole, the pleasures of the drama—tragic and comic—are larger than its advantages. In the bold figure of Cowley, it must be washed in the Jordan to recover its health. A deep purpose of religion alone can make it useful to a nation. Taste may purify it, but the disease continues. It is only the waters of Damascus to the leper. Of English poets, belonging to our golden age, none but Shakspeare come before us undefiled. His vigour of constitution threw off the ranker contagion. With Fletcher's vice and Decker's coarseness, he would have been the fearfulest spectacle the world has beheld of Genius retaining its power, and bereft of its light. The Temple of our Poetry, bowed in his sacrilegious arms, might have remained a melancholy monument of supernatural strength, and fightless despair.

XXIX.—THE DELIGHTS AND CONSOLATIONS OF POETRY.

NEITHER poet nor reader may reckon on the good fortune of Meta-
stasio, who gained a suit at Naples by
some extempore stanzas. A friend
invited the judge to her house. The
poet pleaded in rhyme, and in two or
three days the Court decided in his
favour. Future invaders of India will
scarcely imitate Alexander, walking—
in the lively extravagance of Dave-
nant—after the drum from Macedon,
with Homer in his pocket ; and Utopia
must be erected among the Affghans,
before a captive regains his freedom
by a few verses of an English Euripides.

Life by
Burney,
i. 34.

Preface to
Gondibert.

Poetry is its own reward. A con-
soler in life, it soothes afflictions ;
crowns poverty ; rocks asleep sick-
nesses ; multiplies and refines pleasures ;
endears loneliness ; embellishes the
common, and irradiates the lovely.

The charms
of Imagina-
tion as
preserved
in works.

Poetry
arches the
world with
a rainbow.

It draws up
colours and
perfumes
from the
daily paths
of life.

What en-
chantments
are left
among men.

The Palace
of Song.

It is the natural religion of Literature. Lord Bacon explained the old superstition that a rainbow draws perfume from the ground it hangs over, by supposing it to absorb the bloom of flowers. The dream of science is a reality of song. That Bow which Fancy sets in the clouds of life, drinks fragrance from all its many-coloured joys and sorrows. The hues which it gathers, it restores with milder beauty. The barrenest way-side of want and mourning looks green and cheerful under its brooding line of shadow.

Poetical taste is the only magician whose wand is not broken. No hand; except its own, can dissolve the fabric of beauty in which it dwells. Genii, unknown to Arabian fable, wait at the portal. Whatever is most precious from the loom, or the mine of fancy, is poured at its feet. Love, purified by contemplation, visits and cheers it.

Unseen musicians are heard in the dark. It is Psyche in the palace of Cupid.

True Poetry, sincerely cherished, is a friend for life. It accompanies us to all lands, and enjoys health in every climate. Milton disembarks with the Missionary in the Bay of Islands. The African waggon is a litter for Horace. He who loves Imagination and Pathos wears a ring upon his finger, not less precious than that which Pliny tells us belonged to Pyrrhus, in which Nature had produced the figure of Apollo and the nine Muses. The stone answers the wish. Some happy messenger

Poetry never
forbakes
those who
love it;

travels
everywhere.

The won-
derful ring
of Pyrrhus.

"Of many a colour'd plume sprinkled with gold"

comes to our call. The scene is changed. The street of a great city slopes into a glade of Arcadia; or an Italian moon hangs large and golden between the mountain pines; or the

A poetical
student
walking in
a crowd:
his delights.

shops brighten into gay pavilions, and the trumpet of the tournament rings out its challenge; or a magnificent kingdom of the East flashes through the smoke with all its pinnacles; or a Tyrian sail catches the evening light, and swells softly in the still air of time. What harmony and lustre such visions shed over the tumult and fever of our cares! And he who seeks, finds them:—

“ In spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.”

Mr. Pitt
reading
Milton.

The history of a great statesman exemplifies the poetical enchantment. Pitt sometimes escaped from the roar of contending parties at home and abroad, into the solemn retirements of a favourite author. He left the political elements to fight outside, and barred the gates of Imagination upon the storm. One visitor found him reading Milton aloud, with strong

emphasis, and so deeply engaged in Paradise, as to have forgotten the presence of any people in the world, except Adam and Eve. Compare with this happy portrait the confession of Sir Robert Walpole to Mr. Fox, in the library at Houghton,—“I wish I took as much delight in reading as you do: it would be the means of alleviating many tedious hours in my present retirement; but, to my misfortune, I derive no pleasure from such pursuits.”

A statesman
without
Taste,—
Sir Robert
Walpole.

In whatever degree, however slight, the poetical taste may have been cultivated, the reward and the pleasure will be insured. The Muse's stone has a homely magic. The humblest appeal is never rejected. The farmer who has treasured a few lines of rural description, may bind the sheaves upon his bed of sickness; the rose and the woodbine will trail their clusters down the wall, and the broken light through

These
illusions not
confined to
the learned.

The sick
farmer.

The disabled
squire not
debarred
from
hunting.

the curtains be changed into the tremulous glimmer of elms on the village-green. Even the old squire, no longer startling the woods with his horn, may enjoy a quiet chase in metre, clear a hedge upon a swift hexameter, and, in pursuit of the "brush," which was the pride and crown of his manhood,—

"Still scour the county in his elbow-chair."

Milton, in
his blindness,
feeding
on poetical
remembrances.

How, in all times, have the Muse's enchantments been worked! O Queen of Wonders, what tears hast thou dried! What spirits hast thou sent to the gifted in their sorrows, to touch the mourner with a silver wand, and waft him into Elysium! We think of Milton, after the sight of his eyes had gone from him, when the rays of early studies shone across his path; when the voices he loved in youth—solemn notes of tragic, or livelier numbers of lyric verse—stole into his ear out of the gloom; and night-

ingales fang as sweetly in Cripplegate,
as when the April leaf trembled in his
father's garden.

We remember Camoens in all his trials; whether gazing on land and water from that rocky chair built by Nature for him—and still called by his name—upon an isthmus of the China seas; shipwrecked, with his *Lusiad* held above the waves, and drifting upon a plank to shore; in Lisbon, waiting in solitude and darkness the return of a black servant, who helped to feed his hunger with the alms he begged; or closing his eyes—a sick mendicant and outcast—in a public hospital. We follow Dante, homeless and destitute, with a sentence of flames hanging over his head; a wanderer from city to city in search of rest, having no companion of his trials except the seven cantos of his poem, which he had written before his banishment from Florence; finding

The Poet of
Portugal
and his
compen-
sations.

Dante, a
wanderer.

His con-
solations in
suffering.

in it his consolation, and ever adding a stone to the fabric, as the storm, that beat on him through life, cleared away into short intervals of sunshine.

What upheld the buffeted Pilgrims of Fame in their struggle and journey? Doubtless they felt in all its fever, that passion for renown which the noblest of the three called—

Lycidas.

“The spur which the clear spirit doth raise,
To scorn delight, and live laborious days.”

The poetical
mind a
source of
inward light
and music.

But they had other and nearer joys. An animating, mastering sense of music lived in their hearts, finding utterance in tones more lulling than the south-west wind of the Arcadia, which crept “over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the heat of summer.” Happy eyes that make pictures when they are shut! The fragrant shades of a visionary world enclosed their melody, as thick leaves bury the singing birds when lightnings are abroad. However wintry the path

might be, they knew of funny banks
and verdant gardens, where the violets
were always blowing, and golden lutes
being touched by radiant fingers.

They were conscious of the Muse's
presence in sudden streams of bloom
and lustre upon the air. Even the
strokes of hatred and persecution lost
their power, or dropped with a blunted
edge. Homer's Goddess warding off
the dart from her favourite, is an
allegory of the Poet on the battle-field
of the world, where Beauty—his mind's
mother—throws forward her bright
garment, and intercepts the arrow
from the enemy's bow.

The Muse
reveals
herself to
her
children.

How she
watches
over them
in dangers.

And thus it happens that the poet,
rich in his poverty, carries with him
sweet grapes to quench his thirst, and
greenest trees to shelter his repose.
The stormy day is better for him than
the calm. We are told by Naturalists
that birds of Paradise fly best against
the wind; it drifts behind them the

The poet,
contending
with trials,
compared to
a bird of
Paradise.

gorgeous trains of feathers which only entangle their flight with the gale. Pure Imagination, of which the love-liest of winged creatures is the fitting emblem, seems always to gain in vigour and grace by the tempests it encounters, and in contrary winds to show the brightest plumage.

XXX.—POETRY SHOULD BE STUDIED
IN EARLY LIFE.

A poetical
education
useful in
after years.

IT is a happy feature of English teaching that the child is fed so largely with poetical fruit. A love of the good and the beautiful is thus entwined with the growing mind, and becomes a part of it. Sometimes the muscular ivy does not clasp the oak with a stronger embrace. A remembered verse is pleasing for its own sake, and for the associations it revives.

Street music
remem-
bered.

When Sir Joshua Reynolds, with other English visitors to the Opera in

Venice, heard a ballad which was played in every street of London before they left it, the tears rushed to their eyes, and home, with all its endearments and friends, rose before them. Most affectingly has a living Mr. Hallam. historian expressed the feeling of unnumbered hearts :—"They who have known what it is when afar from Introduction to the Literature of Europe, iv. 425. books, in solitude, or in travelling, or in intervals of worldly care, to feed on poetical recollections, to recall the sentiments and images which retain by association the charm that early years once gave them,—they will feel the inestimable value of committing to the memory, in the prime of its power, what it will easily receive, and indelibly retain."

Nor if the gathering of flowers Humble attempts at composition not to be discouraged. sometimes awake an ambition to grow them—if the reader, smitten with love of an ode, set himself to produce one,—is the injury to his own mind, or

the inconvenience to his friends, likely to be of particular moment. He may mistake his calling and his powers,—may believe himself born to write, instead of to judge; but next to excellence is the desire of it.

In-door
celebrity :
its blessings.

Azais,
Des Com-
pensations.

A poem that bloomed through the little day of domestic reputation, often blends itself healthfully with the atmosphere of home; as the rose, after its leaves are strewed on the ground, mingles its odours with the air, and continues a purifying work when its colour has departed.

The fruits of
Imagination
always
refreshing.

Poetry is born to be the companion of youth. Those hours may be fleeting as they are fair. The flower of the grass is not withered sooner. Temptations and cares overleap the garden. A blazing sword appears at the gate. The hard paths of toil are to be trodden; the soil of life is to be tilled. But why should Manhood and Poetry no longer take sweet counsel together,

and walk through the world as friends?
 Age, with its bereavements and compensations, will endear them more and more to each other. Do not take away a hand that dries the tear, and a voice that sings in the night. What-ever ills befall them by the way, let Youth and Fancy go out of Paradise hand-in-hand.

Youth
 and Fancy
 companions
 until death.

XXXI.—FICTION : THE ROMANCE AND THE NOVEL.

A POEM, unfettered by metre and rhythm, takes the name of Romance. The genealogy of fiction furnishes another proof of the diffusion of mental pleasures. The same stories appear with an altered complexion. The cat of Whittington made the fortune of a merchant of Genoa, as well as of a lord mayor of London. Llywellin's greyhound has a second grave very distant from that of Bethgelert. It

D'Ifræli,
 Amenities,
 iii. 47.

The same
 story in Asia
 and Europe.

Mr. Price's
Preface to
Warton's
English
Poetry,
p. 49,
Edit. 1824.

sleeps and points a moral in Persia. Dear Red Riding Hood puts off her cloak by a Danish fire-side. The dart of Abaris, which carried the philosopher whithersoever he desired it, gratifies later enthusiasts in travel, as the Cap of Fortunatus and the space-compelling boots of the nursery hero. The helmet of Pluto, which protected Perseus in his desperate combat with Medusa, has frequently shielded humbler heads as the Fog-cap of the north ; while the ring of Gyges transferred its advantages of secrecy to the mask of Arthur.

The Romance and the Novel, the chief aspects of Fiction.

For practical purposes, Prose-fiction may be divided into two kinds : (1) the Romance, which is the legend of heroic ; and (2) the Novel, which is the news of common life. The Romance flourishes in the ignorance, the Novel in the refinement of a nation. The fourteenth century asked for exploits of Charlemagne ; the nine-

teenth, how the Duke of Fair-light dines. The same feeling may still be traced in the contrasts of barbarism and civilisation. The wild Arab by his watch-fire, listens out the night to the music of spears in the fierce foray.

The Japanese gentleman, mooring his splendid boat under a tree, hears his fashionable tale from the story-teller who collects the gossip of his neighbourhood.

Manners
and Customs
of the
Japanese,
from Dutch
Travellers,
p. 192.

With ourselves Fiction is only one of the countless pleasures by which curiosity is amused. But to remoter students it presented the collected charms of literature. We can hardly realise the fascinations of Romance in ages, when ability to read a book was a rarer accomplishment than the writing of it would be at present. A Gothic story, before the press vulgarised wonders, was a treasure to be catalogued with the statutes of the realm. The will of a Scottish baronet,

A Gothic
tale in the
dark ages;
its wonders
and interest.

in 1390, includes both in the same bequest. Such a book was the pride of the eyes :—

Its
massiveness.

“ Princes and kings received the wondrous gift,
And ladies read the work they 'could not lift.”

How orna-
mented; the
illumina-
tions and
binding.

The scribe, the artist, and the binder, lavished their time and skill. Six years were not unfrequently spent upon the internal decorations. The margin, in the place of canvass, was enriched with portraits, magnificent dresses, flowers, and fruits. Letters of silver shone on a purple ground. Golden roses studded a covering of crimson velvet; and clasps of precious metal, richly chased, shut up the adventurous knights and radiant damsels in their splendid home. Wonderful were the doings within! Crabbe has playfully unfolded some of them in harmonious verse :—

Works, ii.
The
Library,
p. 59.

Interior of a
castle in
Romance.

“ Hark! hollow blasts through empty courts
resound,
And shadowy forms with staring eyes stalk
round;

See ! moats and bridges, walls and castles rise,
 Ghosts, fairies, demons, dance before our eyes ;
 Lo ! magic verse inscribed on golden gate,
 And bloody hand that beckons on to fate.
 ‘ And who art thou, thou little page, unfold ?
 Say, doth thy lord my Claribel withhold ?
 Go, tell him straight, — Sir Knight, thou must
 resign

The captive Queen : for Claribel is mine.’
 Away he flies ; and now for bloody deeds,
 Black suits of armour, masks, and foaming steeds ;
 The Giant falls ; his recreant throat I seize,
 And from his corslet take the massy keys.”

The Giant is
 plundered,
 and the
 Queen
 restored.

The Knight and Lady of high degree did not keep these worthies to themselves. Over their ample pages, poetical eyes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, pored with untiring satisfaction. Southey discovered in the *Amadis* of Gaul the Zelmane of the *Arcadia*, the Masque of Cupid of the *Faëry Queen*, and the Florizel of the *Winter's Tale*.

The Romance of chivalry replaced the Heroic in a reduced and feeble copy. It was the incredible in water-

Heroic tales
 are followed
 by Chivalric.

colours. We miss the giants and enchanters with their enormous capacities. Things that never could be done, are, indeed, accomplished in every page; but the actors look diminutive and tame. They want the dauntless vivacity of their predecessors. The epic of falsehood was closed.

The
Minerva
school
founded.

The Giant
disappears
in the
sentimental
hero.

Geogra-
phical ec-
centricities
of the new
Romance.

Years passed by, and Fiction put on another shape, and received the name, without the inheritance, of Minerva. Mediæval exaggerations were clothed in modern dresses. Giants, living in impregnable castles, gave way to heroes of præternatural stature in their sentiments, who raved through four volumes—sometimes five—for dark ladies of impossible beauty. What a geography was theirs! Puck found himself out-run. The chronicler of the sayings and doings of the Black Penitents put a girdle round the world, in considerably less than forty minutes. Time and space were

mere circumstances. Kingdoms fraternised. Constantinople abutted on Moorfields; and Julius Cæsar conquered Mexico with Cortes. Probability was despised. Everything came to pass when it was wanted; and the healthiest people died the moment they were in the way. The probable of no account.

The incidents of these tales resembled drop-curtains in small theatres. A specimen of an incident. The effect was terrible. The Vicar's daughter, watching a fine sunset from the churchyard, was ruthlessly carried off by banditti, who stepped out of a Salvator on purpose. Perhaps the scene was laid in a mountain-country, An Alpine adventure. and then, about the middle of the first volume, a sentimental youth was entranced during a moonlight walk by unearthly strains of music proceeding from a lady in thin muslin, who stood with her harp upon a pinnacle of frozen snow, where the wild goat, in these prosaic days, would not find a

Waverley
Novels.

footing. These extravagancies melted before the dazzling creations of Scott, and a fourth class of Fiction delighted the world.

The
modern
tale of
manners and
fashion.

I am not competent to speak of later styles and performances, and will not venture to say whether the irony of Cowper be applicable to our own days :—

“ And novels—witness every month’s Review,—
Belie their name, and offer nothing new.”

Evident
traces of
imitation
and re-
production.

Novelists of
the
eighteenth
century
constantly
returning
into society.

But the hasty observer cannot fail to mark that in gay, as in graver efforts, our century is the era of revised editions. Richardson, Smollett, and their contemporaries, come out in clever abridgements, adapted to the changes of taste, and under various titles. Old friends revisit us with new faces. Amelia has watched the dying embers for a dozen husbands, since Fielding left her; and Uncle Toby’s mellow tones have startled us

down a college staircase, and through the railings of counting-houses in the City. Gentlemen and heroines from whom we parted many years ago, with slight respect for their attainments and morals, have now taken a scientific, or a serious turn. Lovelace is absorbed in entomology ; and Lady Bellafton is a rubber of brasses.

Lovelace
and Lady
Bellafton.

In confidering the objects of Prose-fiction, I am led to think it most useful, as it is most poetical. The grandest outlines of character afford the healthfullest examples. On this account, heroic and chivalrous legends have peculiar advantages. Their colossal virtues are links between the human and a higher organisation. They show a sort of middle life. Imagination presenting to the mind ideal forms of beauty and courage, is a faint shadow of Faith, by which the unseen things of another existence are brought in later years before us.

One good
quality of
the ruder
Romance.

A love of the beautiful and the generous is needed to enlarge the sentiments.

A prematurely practical youth is generally a selfish maturity.

Johnson's advice to Mrs. Thrale upon feminine education.

An ennobling element of thought is wanted ; and a reflective observer predicted a deficiency of generous, brave, and devout feelings in the manhood of a person, in whose youth he discovered a severe restriction of the mind to bare truth and minute accuracy, with dislike of the fanciful, the tender, and the magnificent. Johnson seems to have held the same opinion. Writing to Mrs. Thrale about the education of her daughter, he said :—" She will go back to her arithmetic again,—a science suited to Sophy's case of mind ; for you told me in the last winter that she loved metaphysics more than romances. Her choice is certainly laudable, as it is uncommon ; but *I would have her like what is good in both.*" If life be a curious web, which each man and woman are obliged to weave, why should not a thread of gold run through the wool ? There is a better

quality even than prudence. We meet people every day who think themselves wise because they are selfish. Cut a leaf from a ledger, and you have their life.

The importance of the Romantic element does not rest upon conjecture. Pleasing testimonies abound. Hannah More traced her earliest impressions of virtue to works of fiction; and Adam Clarke gives a list of tales that won his boyish admiration. Books of entertainment led him to believe in a spiritual world; and he felt sure of having been a coward, but for romances. He declared that he had learned more of his duty to God, his neighbours, and himself, from *Robinson Crusoe*, than from all the books—except the Bible,—that were known to his youth. These grateful recollections never forsook him, and the story of De Foe was put into the hands of his children as soon as they were able

The advantages of Fiction shown by examples. H. More.

A. Clarke;

his affection for Robinson Crusoe.

De Foe
makes a
brave sailor.

to read it. Sir Alexander Ball informed Coleridge that he was drawn to the Navy, in childhood, by the pictures which this Ancient Mariner left on his mind.

Foster's
Essays; on
the epithet
Romantic,
p. 153.

It would be an idle endeavour to answer all the objections which have been urged against Fiction. But on one of the perils most earnestly deprecated—the disregard of harmony between the means and the end,—a few remarks may be offered. Let us take the objector's own case, and put it in stronger colours, after this manner. A young man is in love with a lady of higher station, who is not blind to his merits; but her parents talk of settlements, and he has nothing but hope. How is the difficulty to be overcome? In the easiest way. Forty years ago a gentleman came to London from the New Forest, rejected and desperate. All his affections were shattered. With one wrench, he

The
supposed
dangers of
Romance
exhibited in
a figure.

cast off his country and his attachment together. He sails to India ; works hard ; gets promoted ; lives half a century in the jungle, and comes home with two hundred thousand pounds and a portfolio of tigers. What has he to do with the story ? Everything. This fortunate adventurer is the lover's uncle, although nobody knew of the relationship. Well : he has landed at Portsmouth, and is riding leisurely by a dark wood to look at a house which is to let, with a small portmanteau strapped on his horse. This is the moment. Three footpads spring from the trees ; robbery and murder seem inevitable, when his nephew—the young man who could not get married, and who had been reading Hammond's elegies on a stile,—rushes to the rescue. The plunderers disappear ; the kinsmen recognise each other ; the brave defender receives on the spot a cheque for ten

The rich
uncle ; his
return, and
its results.

The attack
and the
rescue.

The recognition and reward.

The happy marriage.

thousand pounds, and departs by the night coach to tell the news to Cecilia. Of course, every difficulty vanishes; the marriage is solemnised, and the last chapter ends in a peal.

On the epithet "Romantic." P. 154.

The story proved to be harmless.

Now, suppose this adventure, in all its absurdity, to be really written and read,—Who is likely to be injured by it? Is it worth a moralist's trouble to work himself into a frenzy, and say that his "indignation is excited at the immoral tendency of such lessons to young readers, who are thus taught to undervalue and reject all sober, regular plans for compassing an object, and to muse on improbabilities, till they become foolish enough to expect them?"

In the first place, it may be denied that one young man in a million ever built his hopes of prosperity or love upon recollections of visionary relatives in Benares. Even real Uncles are forgotten when they never return; and,

secondly, it is not to be assumed that the remote contingencies of life ought to be always rejected as hurtful. Good fortune is an useful delusion. The im-
 probabilities of experience are many, Truth is often stranger than Fiction. the impossibilities are few. The rich kinsman may not arrive from India to make two hearts happy ; but circumstances do fall out in a way altogether contrary to expectation ; helping friends rise up quite as strangely as apparitions of Nabobs from the jungle ; and the dearest chains of affection are sometimes riveted by means scarcely less astonishing, and certainly not more anticipated, than the magical cheque of the dreamer. Instead, The colours of Romance relieve the eye and lighten the traveller. therefore, of starting from a romantic danger, I am inclined, under proper limitations, to welcome a romantic advantage. It is something to keep the spirits up in so long and harassing a journey ; and even the pack-horse goes better with his bells. This

The reason-
ableness of
Sterne's
panegyric.

Rousseau
and Rich-
ardson lost
themselves
in their
imaginary
characters.

Petrarch's
tears over
Grifeldis.

conclusion invites me to remember another pleasure which Prose Fiction shares with Poetic in withdrawing its readers, for a while, from the discomforts of their condition. It pours sunlight on the dingiest window, and sows a hedge of roses round a ruinous dwelling. Sterne justly commended it for cheating fear and sorrow of many weary moments, and leading the traveller from the hard road to stray upon enchanted ground. Naturally, the writer himself feels the liveliest power of the spell. Rousseau wrote the letters of Julia on small sheets of paper, which he folded and read in his walks, with as much rapture as if they had been sent to him by the Post; and Richardson wept for Clementina, as for a real sufferer. The reader enjoys the same enchantment according to his sensibility. Petrarch was so affected by Boccaccio's story of Grifeldis, that he

wished, as he assured his friend, to get it by heart ; and he mentions a scholar who, having undertaken to read it to a company, was interrupted by his tears.

If we look into biography we find that the most refined and the strongest thinkers—the theologian, the poet, and the metaphysician—have turned a kind eye upon Fiction, which has beguiled the leisure and refreshed the toils of Gray and Warburton, of Locke and Crabbe.

One advantage of this kind of literature deserves to be specified with particular earnestness. It gives instruction in amusement. Addison acknowledged that he would rather inform than divert his reader ; but he recollected that a man must be familiar with wisdom before he willingly enters on Seneca and Epictetus. Fiction allures him to the severe task by a gayer preface. Embellished truths

Celebrated men who have taken pleasure in Fiction.

Some reasons for employing it.

are the illuminated alphabet of larger children. “We endure reproofs from our friends in leather jackets,” remarked a scholar to the lively lady of Streatham, “which we should never support if pronounced by our contemporaries in lace and tiffue.”

Mrs. Piozzi.
British
Synonymy.
i. 61.

Fiction, like the drama, speaks to our hearts by exhibitions. Mr. Allworthy was acting a sermon upon charity, when the gentle pressure of the strange infant’s hand on one of his fingers — seeming to implore assistance — out-pleaded, in a moment, the indignant proposal of Mrs. Deborah to put it in a warm basket — as the night was rainy — and lay it at the Churchwarden’s door; Corporal Trim’s illustration of death, by the falling hat in the kitchen, strikes the fancy more than a climax of Sherlock; and the Vicar of Wakefield in the prison is a whole library of theology made vocal.

Fielding’s
Tom Jones.

In exact proportion to the facility and the vividness of the lesson, must be the oversight of its character.

Richardson never sustained so heavy a blow as one of the least susceptible of essayists inflicted, when reading Pamela on the grass of Primrose Hill, and being joined by a familiar damsel, who desired to read in company, he confessed, "I could have wished it had been any other book." How-

Richardson's license of description is to be condemned.

ever ingeniously the highly-coloured scenes of the classic novelists may be defended, the sober judgment will never be convinced. To say that they conduct the history to its catastrophe, and have their sting drawn by the moral, is like telling us to live tranquilly over a cellar of combustibles, because an engine with abundance of water is at the end of the street.

Sir Walter Scott regarded the vices and follies of Fielding's celebrated

Charles Lamb's confession.

Scott's apology is to be received

with cau-
tion.

Immoral
writers
create the
temper that
tolerates
them.

Rambler
No. 4.

hero as those which the world soon teaches to all, and to which society is accustomed to show so much forbearance. But it has been well observed, that he neglected to estimate the extent to which that false indulgence may be the effect of an immoral literature, operating through a long course of years upon the individual minds of which society is composed. Men are quickly acclimatized in sin; and the eye, familiar with disease, is not offended by a few spots on the page.

During the early popularity of Smollett and Fielding, Johnson contributed some wise suggestions respecting the employment of Fiction. He advised the novelist to display virtue in its ideal beauty, not angelical, or improbable — because we only imitate what we believe — but the purest and the noblest within our reach. This selected character he wished to be carried through the various changes and

trials of life, in order that by its victories and its patience — by the afflictions it vanquished or endured — we may be taught what to hope and what to perform. His concluding sentence is fatal to the greatest names in the art: — “Vice should always disgust ; nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united with it as to reconcile it to the mind. Whenever it appears it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practices, and the meanness of its stratagems ; for while it is supported by parts or spirit, it will be seldom heartily abhorred.”

An admonition to authors of Fiction.

Such are some of the pleasures and advantages of Fiction. As the Romance, its object is to raise the mind by proposing to it for imitation characters of purity, courage, and patience ; as the Novel, its work is to check and amend the little weaknesses of temper, by humbling reflections of

A summary of the delights and objects of Fiction.

It is unprofitable, except as it modifies the character.

Robert Hall. Reflections on War. (Miscellaneous Works, p. 322.)

them upon the mirror of the tale. When Fiction fulfils one or other of these duties, it obtains a good report, and deserves to be numbered among the aids to education. The finer feelings are called forth, and objectionable peculiarities are repressed. If this result, in some measure at least, be not produced, the amusement is vain. Emotions are worthless which do not grow into deeds ; and the glass of manners is consulted to no purpose, unless the defect which it exhibits be removed or weakened. The fruit of Fiction, regarded only as a luxury, will always be bitter ; and we may expect to find the hard saying confirmed, which accused it of enervating the understanding and corrupting the heart.

XXXII.—HISTORY : ITS CHARMS AND LESSONS.

HISTORY presents the pleasantest features of Poetry and Fiction ;—the majesty of the Epic ; the moving accidents of the Drama ; the surprizes and moral of the Romance. Wallace is a ruder Hector ; Robinson Crusoe is not stranger than Cræsus ; the Knights of Asby never burnish the page of Scott with richer lights of lance and armour, than the Carthaginians, winding down the Alps, cast upon Livy. Froissart's hero has all the minute painting of Richardson's.

*The Poem
and the
Romance
combined in
History.*

History, in its simplest shape, is the account of a journey to investigate a country, its inhabitants, or one particular character. St. Paul told the Galatians that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,—meaning to say, that he visited the Apostle to make himself more familiar with his mind and

*Epistle to
the Gala-
tians, i. 18.*

*Ἰεροσολίμους
Πέτρον.*

Herodotus,
his truth-
fulness.

feelings. If St. Paul had written all that he saw and heard during the fifteen days of his abode with the Apostle, it would have been a "history." Of this pure form Herodotus offers the largest and the best specimens. His narrative is generally founded upon his observation. He surveyed the battle-fields he describes; keeping no regular journal, but relying upon memory and a few notes, he fell into some inaccuracies. For the most part, however, he has the freshness of an eye-witness. His picture of Egypt is a moving panorama of the Nile. Into whatever region he travels, he makes the reader a companion; whether he gazes upon the superb palace of Sais and its lighted hall of odours, the sepulchral Pyramids, or Babylon—even then in her waning splendour,—as she rose to the Prophet's eye, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." This

Egypt and
Babylon.

feeling of reality, in a severer tone, pleases us in Thucydides. Recording Thucydides and Wellington. the troubles of Peloponnesus, he is Wellington telling the story of the Peninsular War. To the same class, in ancient days, belong Sallust and Tacitus; in modern, Guicciardini and Clarendon.

The second manifestation of History Second form of History. is that of Narrative founded on information drawn from others. It is Paul's visit to Peter related by Luke; or, the Spanish expedition of Scipio told by Polybius on the testimony of Polybius. Lælius. Our venerable Bede is a Bede. humbler example.

History, in its third variety, loses Third shape of historical narrative. the authority of observation. The only eye-sight employed is the critical. State papers replace witnesses. Johnson indicated one of the immediate inconveniences of this change:—"He who describes what he never saw, draws from Fancy. Robertson paints

minds, as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece."

Threefold
division.

History may be considered in three lights,—a pleasurable, an educational, and a moral ; (1) as it entertains the fancy ; (2) opens new sources of instruction ; (3) and cherishes, or enlarges the feelings of virtue. In the first light, its poetical relationship is clearly marked. Imagination creates no grander episodes than the rise and fall of empires. To watch the first smiles and motions of national life in its cradle ; to trace the growth, the maturity, and the decline of kingdoms ; to observe one side of the world brightening in the sun of civilisation, while the other is vapoury and cold ; to see, in the course of years, the flourishing region become dim, and the dark country glimmer into warmth ; Athens ascending into daylight, and Egypt sinking into shadow ; learning setting over Greece to rise upon Italy ;

The rise
and fall of
kingdoms a
splendid
spectacle.

Greece.
Italy.

and dying at Rome to be rekindled at Bagdad :—these are visions to Bagdad. dazzle the eyes, and people the fancy of a poet. It may be questioned whether the modern feverity of research be as profitable as it is ingenious. Modern views of ancient historians. Thucydides no longer weeps at the recitation of Herodotus. Legends of beauty continually disappear, and the rents in history become plainer as the ivy is torn away. Some eyes look sorrowfully upon this stern reformation. In the exquisite image of Landor, it is like breaking off a crystal from the vault of a twilight cavern, Separation of the Poetical and the Real. out of mere curiosity to see where the accretion ends and the rock begins.

The historian has one advantage over the poet. He is not obliged to look abroad for shining illustrations, or corresponding scenes of action. The historian's opportunities compared with the poet's. His images are ready ; his field of combat is enclosed. He wants only so much vivacity as will supply colour

Scene from
Xenophon.

and life to the description. Read the meeting of Cyrus and Artaxerxes in Xenophon. A white cloud spots the horizon ; presently it grows bigger, and is discovered to be the dust raised by an enormous army. As the cloud advances, its lower edge of mist is seen to glitter in the sun ; spear, and helm, and shield shoot forth and disappear, and soon the ranks of horse and foot, with the armed chariots, grow distinctly visible. This is the splendour of the epic ; it is Homer in prose.

Storming a
fortress.

In a different manner, take Drinkwater's description of the burning of the Spanish batteries at the siege of

Gibraltar.

Gibraltar. The flames spread ; a column of fire, rolling from the works, lights up the soldiers and every surrounding object ; ship after ship is caught in the conflagration ; the sea is dyed in a red blaze, and through the canopy of smoke the English

artillery keep hurling terrible missiles. Tacitus, whom Warton calls a great poet, might furnish many dark scenes ; as the sufferings of the Roman army under Cæcina, the dying watch-fires, the troubled slumbers, and the spectre dabbled in gore.

For an instance of the dramatic in history, the reader may go to Dalrymple. Dundee, wandering about Lockabar with a few miserable followers, is roused by news of an English army in full march to the Pass of Killicranky. His hopes revive. He collects his scattered bands, and falls upon the enemy filing out of the stern gateway into the Highlands. In fourteen minutes infantry and cavalry are broken. Dundee, foremost in pursuit, as in attack, outstrips his people ; he stops, and waves his hand to quicken their speed ; while he is pointing eagerly to the Pass, a musket-ball pierces his armour. He rides

A military
picture by
Tacitus.

The death
of Dundee
in the
Highlands.

from the field, but soon dropping from his horse, is laid under the shade of trees that stood near; when he has recovered of the faintness, he desires his attendants to lift him up, and turning his eyes to the field of combat, inquires, "How things went?" Being told that all is well, he replies, with calm satisfaction, "Then I am well," and expires.

His last words,

Famous warriors portrayed by poets. Catiline.

Our poets have drawn splendid pictures of heroes falling in battle. Ben Jonson gives Catiline with the fierce hands still moving among the slain; Burns exhibits the warrior holding forth a bloody welcome to death, and breathing his last sigh in a faint huzza; and Scott surpassed both in Marmion waving his broken sword over his head, and shouting, "Victory!" But the closing scene of Dundee is the most affecting. Every circumstance heightens the catastrophe. His bed is the wild heather, shut in

Marmion.

Affecting sublimity of Dundee's death.

The landscape.

by a mountain bastion, of which the gloom is broken by frequent flashes of random guns. The Pass stretches in dreary twilight before us. The sound is in our ears of a dark river, foaming among splintered rocks,—ever tumbling down and losing itself in thick trees, while the eagle utters a lonely scream over the carnage, and sails away into the rolling vapours.

History, enjoying the pomp and circumstance of Poetry, is confined within narrower boundaries, and governed by stricter laws. Its portraits ought to be likenesses, so far as the writer's industry may acquaint him with the features of his characters. The senatorial dignity of Titian only allegorizes a French Convention.

Popular opinion allows more liberty to the pen and the pencil. It makes faithfulness subordinate to impression. Hannibal is never to be one-eyed, nor Marshal Vendôme hump-backed.

The historian's liberty of description more restricted than the poet's.

How truth of delineation is generally regarded. Hannibal and Vendôme.

The fame of a statesman must be written on his face, and the victories of a general in his muscles. No lean hand may grasp the spear of Achilles. A Dutch Scipio shuffles off the Burgo-master, and strides into his frame in a toga.

Theory of
Reynolds
in art.

This view is encouraged by Reynolds. He wishes events to be poetically represented, and the actors to be adapted to the scenery. He applauds the ennobled presence of St. Paul in the Cartoon. But is there no middle form of expression between the epical prince of Raffaele, and the vulgar mechanic of Bassano? Might not the Apostle's story be told in the inspired eyes, and the feeble limbs? The moral of an exploit vanishes in the exaggeration of the doer. Surely that art is the truest which preserves and dignifies a defect. Let Agefilaus keep his hobble; and the Emperor's neck be awry in the marble. Show

Raffaele
and Bassano:
the beautiful
and the
common.

Falkland with an ungainly figure, and a rustic face brightened by inward beauty. Are we to look for a hero whose nobility is of the soul, and to behold only the tallest grenadier of the column? Why are Johnson's eyes to be alike upon canvas? Why should Milton be cropped in a frontispiece?

Falkland :
how he is
to be
exhibited.

Johnson.

Milton.

We have an example of this false History-painting in the story of Nelson's coat at Trafalgar. He is reported to have silenced the affectionate importunity of his officers, entreating him to conceal the stars on his breast, by saying, "In honour I gained them, and in honour I will die with them."

Nelson at
Trafalgar ;
the false and
the true
legend of a
coat.

This is the heroic stature of the Great Style. Tacitus could not have put a finer sentiment into the mouth of Agricola. But its merit is simply imaginative. Dr. Arnold heard the facts from Sir Thomas Hardy. Nelson wore on the day of the battle the same coat which he had worn for

Arnold's
correction.

weeks, having the Order of the Bath embroidered upon it; and when his friend expressed some apprehension of the badge, he answered him that he was aware of the danger, but that it was "too late then to shift a coat."

The student,
a contemporary of
all ages.

(2.) History is to be regarded in an educational light, as it opens new sources of information. A scholar may be six thousand years old, and have learned brick-making under Pha-

A citizen of
the world.

raoh. Never lived such a citizen of the world; he was Assyrian at Babylon, Lacedæmonian at Sparta, Roman at Rome, Egyptian at Alexandria. He has been by turns a traveller, a merchant, a man of letters, and a commander-in-chief; presented at every court, he knew Daniel, and sauntered through the picture-gallery of Richelieu. Dryden called history a perspective glass, carrying the mind to a vast distance, and taking in the remotest objects of antiquity.

Dryden's
comparison.

How many battles by sea and land the student has witnessed ! He clambered with the Greeks along the rocky shore of Pylus ; he heard the roar of falling houses when the Turks stormed Rhodes ; three times he was beaten back with Condé by that terrible Spanish infantry, which tossed off the French fire like foam from a cliff ; he recognised Dante in the struggle of Campaldino ; stood by the side of Cervantes when an arquebus carried away his left hand ; and stooped with a misty lantern over the bleeding body of Moore.

The reader
is a spectator
of all
combats.

Dante
and
Cervantes.

A cultivated reader of History is domesticated in all families ; he dines with Pericles, and sups with Titian. The Athenian fish-bell often invites him to the market to cheapen a noisy poulterer, or exchange compliments with a bakeress of inordinate fluency. A monk illuminating a Missal, and Caxton pulling his first Proof, are

He visits the
market-
place and
the
monastery.

The
Athenian
demagogue
and the
House of
Lords.

Aids to
historical
improve-
ment.

The speech
and the
comedy :
their
importance.

Walsh :
Preface to
Aristo-
phanes,
p. 10.

among the pleasant entries of his diary. He still stops his ears to the bellowing of Cleon ; and remembers, as of yesterday, the rhetorical frown of the old tapestry, and the scarlet drapery of Pitt.

To study History is to study literature. The biography of a nation embraces all its works. No trifle is to be neglected. A mouldering medal is a letter of twenty centuries. Antiquities, which have been beautifully called History defaced, compose its fullest commentary. In these wrecks of many storms, which Time washes to the shore, the scholar looks patiently for treasure. The painting round a vase, the scribble on a wall, the wrath of a demagogue, the drollery of a farce, the point of an epigram,—each possesses its own interest and value. A fossil court of law is dug out of an orator ; and the Pompeii of Greece is discovered in the Comedies of Aristophanes.

Lord Bacon denounced epitomes with sincere indignation. But who can read all History? Certain episodes must be selected; such as the capture of Rome by the Gauls; the ages of Pericles and Augustus; the Feudal system; Chivalry, and the Crusades; the dawn of Discovery, and the Printing Press. The fragments should be bound together by a connecting line of knowledge, however slender, encircling the whole series of inquiries. The regal, the ecclesiastical, and the commercial elements are to be combined. The visitor must not spend his leisure in the Coliseum, to the exclusion of St. Peter's; nor think himself familiar with London, unless he goes to the Exchange.

Historical
abridgments
are
necessary.

How a
selected
course of
history may
be rendered
profitable.

(3.) The third aspect of History is the moral, as it cherishes the feelings of virtue, and enlarges their action. Southey felt confident that Clarendon, Southey's

testimony
to the
wisdom of
Clarendon.

put into his youthful hands, would have preserved him from the political follies which he lived to regret and outgrow. Guicciardini has some claim to his reputation of communicating high thoughts to his readers ; but the assertion that historians, in general, have been the true friends of virtue, will be rejected by all except the credulous, or the indifferent.

Hume :
Essays, p. 38.

We have only one national record of which the single design is to elevate and direct the mind. Jewish History is God's Illuminated Clock set in the dark steeple of Time. It is man's world which common narrative describes. Actions are weighed in man's scales. The magnitude of a deed determines its character. Paul Jones is a pirate ; Napoleon is a conqueror. One assassination is a murder ; ten thousand deaths are glory. Yet it is supposable that, in the eyes of angels,

Hebrew
History : its
light and
instruction.

The popular
manner of
composing
History.

a struggle in a dark lane and a battle of Leipzig differ in nothing but excess of wickedness.

History is a moral teacher, however, in despite of its ministers. When Poussin gathered a handful of dust from the ground, and declared it to be ancient Rome, he was abridging philosophy in an epitaph. Tyre, burned by Alexander, and sacked by the Mamelukes, is a homily on fortune.

Poussin's
handful of
dust.

Tyre in its
magnifi-
cence and
ruin.

“What does not Fate? The tower that long had stood

Armstrong.

The crashing thunder and the warring winds,
Shook by the sure but slow destroyer Time,
Now hangs in doubtful ruin o'er its base,
And flinty pyramids and walls of brass
Descend. The Babylonian spires are sunk;
Achaia, Rome, and Egypt, moulder down.
Time shakes the stable tyranny of thrones,
And tottering empires sink with their own
weight.”

There is a sound of solemn sadness in the saying, that the glory of man is but as the flower of grass,—a more

Mighty
princes of
ancient
times: their
glory.

perishable thing than the grass itself, more alluring to the eye, but exposed to fiercer enemies, and to the swifter ruin of the scythe. They are gone—the tyrants of ancient dynasties, with their splendour and cruelties,—and have bequeathed to their successors the

Isaiah, x. 3. warning voice of the Prophet, “*Where will ye leave your glory?*” Think of the

Sesostris and question having been asked of Sesostris, or Belshazzar! But so it comes to

pass. Their magnificence is taken off, like robes and crowns when a coronation is over. The great Conqueror strikes his sword into life, and a gulf yawns between Cæsar and his legions. The glory remains on this side of the chasm. The light of an empire dies out, like embers on a cottager’s hearth. All the flashing shields of Persia, with the silver throne of Xerxes in the midst, could not cast one ray into the shadows. How is the king to summon his guard? What

The glory
of the
monarch
never fol-
lows him.

bridge may swing across the darkness
between Eternity and Time?

History, tolling its bell from that
dome which overshadows the world,
gathers us to the death, the funeral,
and the judgment of Potentates.
A deep sea has gone over them.
Only here and there they rise above
the waves, like rocks darting through
the surf in the flashes of a storm;
and straining our eyes into the dreary
twilight, we descry, by the dying
glimmer of ancient history, that the
ocean is of blood.

Foster:
Life and
Corre-
spondence,
i. 185.

But History teaches another lesson
from the grandeur of olden Monarchs,
before the moth fretted their purple.
It was not alone the crumpled rose-
leaf that tortured their enervated
senses. Fears, mysterious and spectral,
continually rose up with menacing
aspect. Oriental annals are funeral
sermons. Southey has painted, with
a truthful sublimity, the feelings of

Unhap-
piness of
Eastern
kings;
described by
Southey.

Haroun al
Raschid.

Mahommedan sovereigns,—mourners in magnificent festivals, wretched in the sunshine and smiles of Beauty, and ever listening, in the golden palace, for the Destroyer's trumpet at the gate. The apprehension haunted them in youth, and overwhelmed them with a horrible dread in age. A vision in the night, a strain of music, a strange face in needlework, startled them into tears. "Haroun al Raschid opened a volume of poems, and read, 'Where are the kings, and where are the rest of the world? They are gone the way which thou shalt go. O thou who chooseth a perishable world, and callest him happy whom it glorifies, take what the world can give thee, but Death is at the end!' And at these words, he who had murdered Yahia and the Barmecides wept."

Whatever chapter of History we may open, some text of alarm is certain to strike our eye. Europe shares the

terrors of Asia. In the noble words of Raleigh, "Death, which hateth and destroyeth a man, is believed; God, which hath made him and loves him, is always deferred." But Conscience, chilled by the stealing shadow, tosses on its bed. Charles the Fifth unclutches Navarre; and the remembered blood of martyrs drops heavily—the warning of the storm,—upon the pillow of Francis.

History of
the world
at the
conclusion.

XXXIII.—THE CHOSEN FLOWERS OF HISTORY—BIOGRAPHY.

HISTORY is a great painter with the world for canvas, and life for a figure. It exhibits Man in his pride, and Nature in her magnificence:—Jerusalem bleeding under the Roman, or Lisbon vanishing in flame and earthquake. History must be splendid.

Some incon-
veniences
in History
enumerated.

Bacon called it the pomp of business. Its march is in high places, and along the pinnacles and points of great affairs. The extent and brilliancy of the picture render the execution difficult and unsatisfactory. The historian cannot isolate a hero, or a saint. The contagion of some infamous example infects his narrative. The impudent stare of a Castlemaine confronts a Barrow. Sir Thomas Browne had this inconvenience in his thoughts when he complained that History sets down things which ought never to have been done, or never to have been known, and suggested the advantage of choosing noble patterns from among different nations. Such a choice makes Biography—of which Fuller has sketched a happy outline, in declaring its proper aim and task to consist in, (1) gaining some glory to God; (2) preserving the memory of the dead; (3) holding forth examples

Le Moyne.

Christian
Morals,
Part iii.

The History
of the
Worthies of
England, i.
ch. 1.

to the living ; (4) and furnishing entertainment to the reader.

The last quality gives to Biography the most attractive shape of instruction. The voyage and the journey of life are related with every variety of accidents, shipwrecks, and escapes. "For my own part," is the confession of ^{Prose Works,} iii. 397. Dryden, in reference to History, in which he included Biography, "who must confess it to my shame, that I never read anything but for pleasure, it has always been the most delightful entertainment of my life." The same ^{A Northern poet's love of} passion was pleasantly manifested in ^{Biography.} the Danish poet, Oehlenschläger, who, when a boy, and leading his father's choir at church, listened eagerly to the Lessons of the day, but disappeared behind the organ at the first hint of the divided sermon.

Plutarch, by the general consent of ^{Plutarch :} Criticism, is the representative of ^{his} popular Biography. He has three of ^{character.}

Fuller's distinctive notes very largely developed ; nor, according to his measure of knowledge and light, is he wanting in the religious element.

Hayley :

An ingenious rhymers of a former day asserts his claim to our admiration and regard :—

Poetical
Works,
ii. 22.

“ O blest Biography ! thy charms of yore
Historic Truth to strong affection bore ;
And fostering Virtue gave thee, as thy dower,
Of both thy parents the attractive power
To win the heart, the wavering thought to fix,
And fond delight with wise instruction mix.
First of thy votaries, peerless and alone,
Thy PLUTARCH shines, by moral beauty known ;
Enchanting Sage ! whose living lessons teach
What heights of Virtue human efforts reach.

Plutarch stands between the Historian, the Poet, and the Romancer, and catches the beautiful lights of all. His account of Theseus resembles a legend from an old chronicle, or a chapter of magic. He indicates his theory of composition at the beginning of “ Alexander,” where he observes

His
romantic
stories.

His ideas
of a good
biographical
style.

that the virtues or the vices of men are not always seen best in their most distinguished, or notorious exploits; but that oftentimes an indifferent action, a short saying, or a ready jest, opens more intricacies of the true character than a siege, or a battle.

He supports his argument by the practice of Painters, who bestow their chief labour on the face and eyes of the sitter, and run over other parts of the picture with a hastier brush. In like manner, the Biographer, whose book is a portrait, is recommended to copy with diligence the features of the mind, and that changeful expression which may be learned from its eyes. The detail and circumstances of a scholar's industry, or a politician's plot, he may touch in a broad outline, or leave to historical inquirers.

Plutarch's *Lives* recall Titian's portraits. He shows the face of a hero, or a philosopher, in the roughness,

The
Biographer
imitates the
Portrait-
painter.

Plutarch
compared to
Titian.

the glow, and the shadows of thought and motion. His individuality is never hard. He causes the representation of character to help the attainment of a general and striking effect. His memoirs are the Picturesque of Biography. Reading becomes sight ; some vivid touch animates and fixes the scene. Cæsar, in the Senate-house, surrounded by conspirators, and turning his face in every direction, meets only the gleam of steel. Pyrrhus, wounded and faint, suddenly opens his eyes on Zopyrus, in the act of waving a sword over his neck, and darts at him so fierce a look, that he springs back in terror, and his hands tremble. On another occasion, the white charger of Sylla, lashed by a servant who saw his danger, carries the rider with a plunge between two falling spears.

The vividness of his delineations makes them real.
The death of Cæsar.

The last look of Pyrrhus.

Sylla's escape.

The happiness of Plutarch's anecdotes.

The slight circumstances of Plutarch are not mere anecdotes, inserted for

the sake of amusement. They are traits of feeling and disposition ; short lines from a page of the heart put into italics. Homer is not more pleasantly natural. He tells us of his little girl, and her anxiety that her dolls might share in the attentions of the nurse. One stroke of the pen identifies Agesilaus. Returning from the victory of Chæronea, he makes no alteration in his furniture, or establishment, and wishes his daughter to be contented with her plain wooden carriage. We have all the wilfulness of Cleopatra epitomized when, to avoid discovery, she rolls herself in a carpet, and being carefully tied up at full length, is delivered in the dusk of the evening, like a large parcel, at the palace of Cæsar.

Occasionally he introduces little Plutarch's rural touches. views of fields and gardens, which are extremely agreeable. When Lucullus,

Summer
and winter.

abandoning his Parthian expedition, marched in the middle of summer against Tigranes, and had gained the summit of Mount Taurus, he saw with wonder that the corn was still green. At a later season, his soldiers were wetted every day in the narrow, woody roads, by snow that fell on them from the trees.

Vafari.

History of
Painting,
i. 187.

The charm of Plutarch has allured many imitators. In modern times, Vafari breathed into the histories of painters and men of art the engaging simplicity and freshness of the Greek. We seem to listen to the Masters whom he describes, and find the exclamation of Lanzi upon our tongue:—It was thus that Raffaele and Andrea taught their scholars, and the sharp, quick sentence flashed from the lips of Buonarrotti. It is true that the reputation of Vafari has been built up by scholarly hands. He enjoyed the aid which

Reynolds was accused of concealing, and had his Johnson in a Camalduline monk.

Hume wished Robertson to adopt this familiar kind of history, and make Plutarch his model for a series of modern lives. Avoiding disquisition, the characters of celebrated persons were to be illustrated by domestic anecdotes, striking observations, and a general sketch of their employments. Hume also turned the eye of his friend upon the little groups of inferior actors, with faces more or less known, whom, in his happy phrase, we meet in the corners of history.

The proposal was ingenious, as it showed the way to fill a gallery with portraits of discoverers, statesmen, painters, and men of letters. The annals of an age would be combined in a single view, while the reader, standing in the open field of universal history, and overlooking the barren

Stewart's
account of
life and
writings of
Robertson,
p. 62.

Hume's
plan very
promising
of fruit.

places, might gather all the flowers, and make everything good and pleasant his own.

Various
kinds of
Biography;
their
comparative
pleasures
and advan-
tages.—
The
Political.
The
Military.

The least interesting form of Biography is the Political. A life of Walpole is a prolonged record of the squabbles of Party. Who cares for Harley, except as the friend of Pope? The lives of soldiers are scarcely more satisfactory. The incidents are for-rows; and only in rare cases, as in the British struggle with Napoleon, is the sympathy of the reader justly awakened. A thousand dreary chapters of ambition and blood must be waded over, before the leaf opens upon Waterloo, or Corunna. The sea is fruitfuller of instruction; and Nelson and Collingwood supply manuals of patriotism and affection.

Nelson and
Colling-
wood.

Lives of
eminent
Christians.

Biography, exclusively serious, or devotional, contains many elements of beauty. The sequestered teacher, the zealous missionary, and the glorified

martyr, have characteristic features of sublimity and tenderness. How curious is our sensation in closing an account of Marlborough, or Richelieu, and taking up the gentle portraiture of Walton. It is like being suddenly carried from the Thames, between London and Greenwich, rocking its stately ships and lined by busy wharfs, into the pastoral Wye, with its modest current, its green farms, and the solemn ruins of God's House. Compare a splendid saloon in Paris with the holy scene in the palace of Salisbury, where we behold—

“The trusty staff that Jewel gave
To youthful Hooker, in familiar style
The gift exalting, and with playful smile.”

Words-
worth :
Ecclesiasti-
cal Sonnets,
xxxix.

The panegyric once spoken of a departed saint is true of every other ; and if an age be evil and deserve him not, it is the more needful to have such lives preserved in memory, to instruct our piety, or upbraid our

Jeremy
Taylor to
Lord
Carbery.

fins. And so after the tree of Paradise has been cut down, the dead trunk may help to uphold the falling temple, or kindle a fire upon the altar.

Scientific
lives
inculcate
habits of
observation.

The history of men of science has one peculiar advantage, as it shows the importance of little things in producing great results. Smeaton drew his principle of constructing a lighthouse, from noticing the trunk of a tree to be diminished from a curve to a cylinder. Rembrandt's marvellous system of splendour and shade was suggested by accidental gleams of light in his father's mill. White, of Selborne, carrying about in his rides and walks a list of birds to be investigated; and Newton turning an old box into a water-clock, or the yard of a house into a sun-dial, are examples of those habits of patient observation which scientific biography attractively recommends.

Literary
biography is

But the annals of pure literature

afford the highest gratification, whether the subject be a poet, a philosopher, or that refined inquirer after beauty and wisdom who passes under the universal name of scholar. It was the belief of Johnson that no literary life in England has been well written. The gorgeous tale of genius is always left half told. Time, which destroys its memorials, enlarges its lustre. It is only since biography and letters became convertible into gold, that the contemporaries of famous men preserve and publish the sayings of the departed. How we might have rejoiced if Occleve, instead of prefixing to a manuscript a portrait of Chaucer, had given a few recollections of the poet himself, and fragments of his table-talk about the Pilgrimage to Canterbury; or if Ben Jonson, who survived Shakspeare twenty-one years, had presented to the world a short review of his friend's festive evenings!

the most
pleasing.

The history
of a great
man is
feldom
complete.

Chaucer and
Occleve.

But the age made no sign when its noblest son passed away. The birth, the marriage, the authorship, and the retirement of Shakspeare compose his biography. If we seek for news of prejudices, infirmities, charity, and love, it is found in his verses alone. Deep is the sigh of taste for lost treasures, whether it muses upon the sweet, serious conversation of Spenser, the gilded current of Hooker's sequestered thoughtfulness, the variegated wisdom of Milton, the magnificent explorings of Bacon, or the Paradisiacal dreams of Taylor. Few footprints remain in the sand before the ever-flowing tide. Long ago it washed out Homer's. Curiosity follows him in vain. Greece and Asia perplex us with a rival Stratford-upon-Avon. The rank of Aristophanes is only conjectured from his gift to two poor players of Athens. Of every country and season the complaint is

Mitchell :
Knights,
p. 56.

felt and uttered. Precious would be the journal by a Florentine De Foe of the indoor occupations of Dante. Think of beholding, as in a clear glass, Macchiavelli living along the lines of his political web; Galileo watching the moon plough her way across the clouds; or Tasso, with Polybius in his hand, marshalling the knights of Godfrey.

The most delightful life is that which a loving friend composes from his own recollections. Boswell's *Johnson* is the model and the master-piece. In a humbler way, Roger North's account of the Lord-keeper Guildford and his two brothers is admirable for its dramatic truth and character.

Of one of these, a Turkish merchant, who returned to England in the reign of Charles the Second, he has left a sketch so lively and particular, that we seem to have lived in the same house. We accompany him to

Macchia-
velli.

Galileo.

Tasso.

Familiar
biography;

Roger
North.

A Turkish
merchant's
English
adventures.

Bridewell, and mark his trepidation at the turnkey with the gruff voice, who recalled the alarming "Chiaus" of Constantinople ; we hold our breath at his daring adventure in the tower of Bow Church, when he swung his corpulent body round the column ; or take his arm to St. Paul's, on Saturdays, when Sir Christopher Wren was there, to have "a snatch of discourse" about the building.

The veracity
of a life-
history in-
dispensable.

Whether much or little be known, no secrets should be kept. Biography is useless which is not true. The weaknesses of character must be preserved, however insignificant or humbling. The jest-book of Tacitus, the medicated drinks of Bacon, the extempore rhymes of Chesham, the preparatory violin of Bourdaloue, and the fancy-lighting damsons of Dryden, have their place and value. They are the errata of genius, and clear up the text. A French mathematician had

pleasant doubts concerning the animal wants of Newton, and was disposed to regard him as an intellectual being, in whom the mind's flame had absorbed each grosser particle. It is a precipitous fall from dividing a ray of light, or writing *Comus*, to weariness and dinner. But Biography admonishes pride, when it displays Salmasius, the champion of kings, shivering under the eye and scourge of his wife; or bids us stand at the door of Milton's academy, and hear the scream and the ferule upstairs. It steals on the Poet and the Premier in their undress:—Cowley in dressing-gown and slippers, and Cecil with his treasurer's robe on the chair.

The works of an author are not always evidence for the Biographer, because talent has a professional temper which it manifests in type, or colours. Watteau was only gay in a landscape, and Young was cheerful without his

The
Marquis de
L'Hôpital.

An indoor
scene.—
Salmasius.

A book, or a
work of art,
sometimes
illustrates
the temper
of genius.

Walton's
mistake
about
Hooker.

pen. A delicate judgment distinguishes the natural from the artistic frame of thought. But in numberless instances the book or the picture is a commentary on the mind that produced it, and corrects a false opinion of character and endowments. Walton imagined Hooker to have been simple and childlike in worldly affairs; whereas the *Polity* shows an acute observer of mankind, and a vein of strong and quiet humour flowing through the learned argument.

People
who write
memoirs of
themselves.

To be re-
garded with
distrust.

When a man relates his own life, we call it an Autobiography. These portraits may be captivating, but can seldom be trusted. The composer unconsciously, or by design, modifies and softens a harsh feature, or an unpleasing expression. His *ideal* of excellence answers the purpose of a painter's lay-figure. He disposes and dresses it in favourable lights and rich draperies. A deformed mind is muffled in cloth

of gold. Such a person resembles Prior giving his picture to St. John's in a brocaded suit. A vice, or a bad custom, strongly marked and decided, is shaded off into a neutral tint. How amusing is Clarendon's vindication of his appetite when, speaking in the third person, he says:—"He indulged his palate very much, and even took some delight in eating and drinking, but without any approach to luxury."

Clarendon's
gloss upon
his own
festivity.

In Browne's singular piece of mind-painting, the same self-delusion is conspicuous, and throws a doubtfulness over the whole. It is the physician's likeness drawn by himself, and presented to Posterity. The mightier the writer the more his tale will be suspected. It was hinted by Cæsar's enemies that his *Commentaries*, which are a chapter of autobiography, would have been longer if he had inserted his defeats.

Religio
Medici.

Cæsar's
omissions.

Notwithstanding its defects, per-

Theatrical
Gossip :
C. Cibber.

Personal
memoirs of
B. Cellini.

sonal narrative is always entertaining. No style admits of so many trifles ; moreover, autobiographers are generally on good terms with themselves, and amuse us, in spite of our contempt. To this class belongs Colley Cibber's *Apology*, which is the elaborate miniature of a coxcomb. Cellini's mood is higher and darker. He opens his mind to the public gaze, and records with imperturbable tranquillity the symptoms of its diseases and its health. We see him in every posture of debasement ; abandoned and superstitious ; a scorner of the ignorant, and a believer in magic ; passing, by one step, from a brutal insult to a religious sonnet, and fighting a duel with his eye upon Providence.

The
struggles of
a student ;
Huet.

The scholar's story is told by Huet, bishop of Avranches. The order never had an abler representative. Of noble descent, he lost his parents in childhood, and fought his way to

learning through all the ingenuity of persecution. His schoolfellows stole his books, tore his papers, or wetted them until the ink ran. During play-time they barred up his door ; to enjoy a quiet hour of study he rose with the sun, while his tormentors were asleep, or hid himself in the thick shade of the wood. But his efforts were unsuccessful. His companions hunted the student among the bushes, and drove him from his concealment. At ^{His} last he became his own master, and ^{triumph,} ^{and old age.} the hill of knowledge and fame was rapidly climbed. From the age of twenty almost up to ninety years, he pursued his studies with a vigour that no labour could subdue. Languor was unknown to his iron nerves. After six or seven hours spent in mental toil, he cheerfully closed his books, singing to himself, and ready and eager for a new encounter.

We owe these lighter touches of ^{Auto-} ^{biography}

gives a
near view
of personal
disposition.

self-portraiture to the form of composition which Huet selected. A grave historian would have hesitated to relate the prodigies of fencing, jumping, and muscular strength, which he appears to have esteemed, as Johnson exulted in his "feat" after hounds. But as the individual record of perseverance and learning, the autobiography of Huet is invaluable. What age will behold another scholar to whom astronomy and Greek were equally easy? who dissected with his own hand three hundred eyes, and edited the Delphin Classics?

Sometimes Autobiography takes
 Confessions. the earnest tone of Confessions, as in
 Augustine. the penitential gloom of Augustine,
 Rousseau. and the melodrama of Rousseau.
 Frequently it flows into the short
 Diaries. entries of the Journal; Evelyn hears
 an admirable sermon by Pearson; and
 Pepys sheds tears for a feather or a
 Letters. doublet. Letters are acknowledged

memoirs of Self. Horace Walpole's correspondence inlays his own mind in mosaic. The epistolary style is always artificial. The opening of the heart to a friend is one of the fables of the golden age. Even Cowper had a tinge for his cousin. What a despiser of verses was Pope by the *Post* ! But the frozen housekeeper of Lord Oxford would have told a different story when, in one winter night of the terrible "Forty," she answered the impatient poet's fourth bell for a sheet of paper.

Pope
ringing up
the servants
to secure
a rhyme.

From the lessons of Biography four may be chosen. (1.) It suggests a comparison between the difficulties of earlier and later readers :—

The
teaching of
Biography.

"On shelf of deal, beside the cuckoo-clock,
Of cottage-reading rests the chosen stock,"

which might have bewildered by its luxury a divine of 1300. The Greek sage had few aids. Plato devoted

The ancient
and the
modern
reader
contrasted.

three hundred pounds to the purchase of three books of a distinguished Pythagorean; and Aristotle invested twice that sum in the small library of a deceased philosopher. Jerome nearly ruined himself to procure the works of Origen; and Leo bartered five hundred pieces of gold for five books of Tacitus. The biographer may moralise the pen he holds. Petrarch being at Liege, in the earlier half of the fourteenth century, and anxious to copy two speeches of Cicero, with difficulty obtained a few drops of ink as yellow as saffron.

(2.) Biography cheers merit when its hopes are drooping. It leads the student down a gallery of portraits, and gives the comforting, or warning history of each. It shows Jackson working on his father's shop-board, and cherishing a love for Art by a visit to Castle Howard; Richardson, a printer's apprentice, stealing an hour

from sleep to improve his mind, and scrupulously buying his own candle, that his master might not be defrauded ; or the Chinese scholar Morrison, labouring at his trade of a last and boot-maker, and keeping his lamp from blowing out with a volume of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*.

Occasionally one incident in the life of a remarkable person contains the most profitable instruction. Prior, on the death of his father, was sent to Westminster School, which he left to assist his uncle, a vintner at Charing Cross. He remembered Busby, and made Horace the companion of his leisure. The Latin poet was to be the key of his fortunes. The Rummer Tavern was the Club of the Nobility, and numbered among its visitors the celebrated Lord Dorset, to whom Dryden addressed his *Essay* on dramatic poetry, and who, before he grew fat and nervous, was the gayest con-

Morrison.

The use
of spare
minutes
exemplified
in Prior.

He reads
Horace.

Is patronised
by Dorset.

His
commercial
influence.

Georgias
and Plato.

Phocion.

verfer of that sparkling age. Upon one occafion he found the vintner's nephew reading Horace. A different verſion of the ſtory is given, but with the ſame reſult. He expreſſed his intereſt in the young man's welfare, and undertook the care of his education. Cambridge air ripened his powers. He roſe to political renown, maintained at Verſailles his reputation for wit, and returning to England, drew from Swift the announcement, "Prior is come home from France for a few days ; *Stocks riſe at his coming.*"

(3.) Biography turns our eyes from the preſent to the future. In life, Georgias may be more applauded than Plato, and Salieri ſnatch the reward from Mozart. Years bring the change and the recompence. The ſtatue follows the hemlock of Phocion ; the chair of Boccaccio is raiſed over the aſhes of Dante. A true intellect ſtands like a watch-tower upon the

shore; the waves thunder against it, and vanish in spray. Its clear and steady lamp burns in the storm, a consolation and a guide over the dark sea to the haven of glory. Biography is the application of History to the heart, and its chiefest fruit is patience.

He who strives to make himself different from other men by much reading, gains this advantage, that in ill fortunes he has something left of entertainment and comfort.

Selden ;
Discourses,
or Table-
Talk,
p. 146.

(4.) The grandest lesson of Biography is the need of moral and religious principle. This is the burden of all its music. Stop for a moment before that youthful face, which shoots such a fitful and dazzling brightness from its proud, visionary eyes. It is the portrait of Chatterton. Begin with his childhood. At six years of age he did not know A; he spent the same number of months in reaching P. Prior's plan of alluring the scholar

The story of
Chatterton,
and its
moral.

He learns
his letters.

with gingerbread letters, to be eaten as they are learned, might have failed. Suddenly a spark dropped on the cold mind. His mother tore up an old music-book for waste paper, and the painted capitals caught his eye. She said that he fell in love with the manuscript. A black-letter Bible completed the conquest of the dunce. He awoke like a giant, morning, noon, and evening, devouring books with unsatisfied hunger.

His
pride and
ambition.

His temptation grew with his intellect. A manufacturer requested him to choose a device, or inscription, for a cup. "Paint me," answered the boy, "an angel with wings and a trumpet to trumpet my name over the world." It was Milton's daring without his prayer. The tempter of Chatterton was pride. One of his latest letters is still preserved, in which the terrible working of an ungoverned spirit is shown by the emphasis of his pen.

In the
British
Museum.

“It is my PRIDE, my native, unconquerable pride, that plunges me into distraction. You must know that nineteen-twentieths of my composition is Pride. I must either live a slave or a servant—to have no will of my own, no sentiments of my own, which I may freely declare as such,—or DIE.”

To feed this pride he robbed his neighbours. It is quite conceivable that a boy-genius, overflowing with mirthful strength, might banter a pompous pewterer by a Norman pedigree, or a dull topographer with a castle in the clouds. But Chatterton's aim was money. His literary frauds. His literary frauds. The pride that enslaved his soul at Bristol, drove him to London. Its bondage became fiercer. One after another his home-thoughts and recollections are whirled away, like spring blossoms in a hurricane. The black-letter Bible is lost in shadow. Mother, Goes to London.

His tempt-
ation,
misery, and
death.

and sisters, the gifts of love, and the lights of ambition, disappear. Only Pride remains. He retires to his dreary chamber; collects his fragments of verse and prose; tears them in pieces; mingles the poison; swallows it, and plunges over the ghastly precipice in sullen, tempestuous, magnificent despair.

Mark the melancholy moral. If Chatterton had lived a few weeks longer, he might have been lifted from his sorrows. We are told that soon after his death, the Head of a college in Oxford visited Bristol to investigate the "Rowley Poems," and help the writer, or discoverer, if he found him worthy.

XXXIV. — LITERATURE OF THE PULPIT—ITS ENTERTAINMENT.

WHEN Beauclerk's books were sold, Wilkes expressed his astonishment at

finding so large a collection of sermons in the library of a fashionable scholar.

Johnson said, "Why, sir, you are to remember that sermons make a considerable branch of English literature." Johnson's opinion of English sermons.

The caution might be widely spread. In every Christian land the learned mind has poured its choicest gifts into Theology. Chrysostom warms the fourth century like a sun. The discourses of St. Bernard are shining lights in dark ages. Dante, whom he preceded by more than a hundred years, caught no views of Paradise from the mountain-top so fruitful and serene. If we turn our eyes to France, Bossuet is her grandest poet, and Pascal eclipses Montesquieu. St. Bernard and Dante.

The gloomy recess of an ecclesiastical library is like a harbour, into which a far-travelling Curiosity has sailed with its freight, and cast anchor. An old library described. The ponderous tomes are bales of the mind's merchandize. Odours of dis-

tant countries and times steal from the red leaves, the swelling ridges of vellum, and the titles in tarnished gold. Davenant's description of their covers sprinkled with dust, and long streets of spiders' webs, is striking as the lesson it gives is significant,—

“In these heaven's holy fire does vainly burn,
Nor warms, nor lights, but is in sparkles
spent;
Where froward authors with disputes have
torn
The Garment seamless as the firmament.”

These are the controversies and the speculations of the schoolmen, and would scarcely be found on the shelves of Beauclerk. But the elder rhetoric, which had taken the shape of exhortation, abounds in elements of interest and materials of deep or elegant thinking, which the polite reader may separate from the text. Each volume is a common-place book of brilliant sayings and erudite allusions; a treasure-

The schoolmen; polemical and casuistical theology.

The English sermon a treasure-house of miscellaneous knowledge.

house of products and antiquities from every climate and age of intellect. Here are gathered, without much attempt at order or classification, battered armour of Homeric chiefs, dry chips of Seneca, poisoned arrows of Juvenal, magical flutes of Apuleius, grotesque words coined by that great minter, Tertullian, and spiritual clothing of wrought gold from Chrysostom. He who seeks for amusement can find it. The slightest circumstances of ancient and modern life are preserved;—from the vermilion cord with which the public officer pursued and marked the Athenians who neglected the Assemblies, to the first appearance of the umbrella in London.

The Preachers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are its familiar historians. Latimer opens the royal kitchen. Andrews leads common life into the sun. We learn from Donne how street-begging had become a

Life in
Athens and
London.

Sermon Lxv.
preached at
St. Paul's.

trade in 1625. Parents educated their children in it, and expert professors of the art received apprentices, whom they perfected in making a face and a story. Perhaps the English preacher caught this habit of sketching manners from Chrysostom, in whose Homilies we obtain so many lively views of Constantinople and Antioch; who, in enforcing the study of the Scriptures, dissuades parents from hanging the Gospels round the neck of a child, or near the bed, as a charm; and condemns the rich for using dice every day, and keeping their sumptuous Bibles shut up in the cases.

Hom. in
1 Cor. xliii.

Hom. in
Joann.
xxxii.

The Poet
taught
by the
Preacher.

During two hundred years the sermon shaped and nourished the English mind. Greek and Latin fountains of philosophy and grace flowed into Poetry from the Pulpit. Shakespeare might have picked up crumbs of Plato and Euripides from the orator of Paul's Cross. The preacher had a

religious and an instructive character. He entertained that he might improve the hearer. He unfolded the grandeur of a Prophecy, or the comfort of an Epistle, and alarmed the conscience, or bound up a wounded heart; he brought tidings of foreign learning to the scholar, of discoveries to the naturalist, and of manners to the people, and thus he won the ears of the thoughtful, the inquisitive, and the idle.

The sermon reflected the research, feelings, and experience of the speaker. The reading of a week slipped into a parenthesis. If Donne sets forth the praises of devout women in the morning of Christianity, he remembers a Venetian story about the matrons who were sent to propitiate an empress. In showing that sin separates a man from God, he tells the congregation of his own visit to Aix-la-Chapelle for the sake of the Baths, and how the house

Illustrations
from
Donne.

Sermon
CII. at
Lincoln's
Inn.

he lodged in—big enough for a small parish—was occupied by swarms of Anabaptists, who agreed in nothing but keeping apart from one another; the father excommunicating the son on the third floor, and the uncle his nephew in the attic.

Amusement is only the accident of our early eloquence. In devotion, learning, argument, and imagination, it is unequalled. It comes warm from the Bible. The irradiated mind shoots a glory into the commonest word, and Christian duties are drawn with so much patience of love and embellishment, that later pens seem to produce faint and imperfect copies. Mr. Keble illustrates one of his poems by a passage from Miller's *Bampton Lectures*; but it will be seen that the comparison had been employed two centuries before by Donne, and at a later period by Seed. Its last appearance is in a discourse of Mr. Melvill:—

Christian
Year;
St. Bartho-
lomew.

THE EYE OF THE PORTRAIT.

MILLER.

“The point worthy of observation is, to note how a book of the description and comparisons which we have represented Scripture to be, possesses this versatility of power: this eye, like that of a portrait, uniformly fixed upon us, turn where we will.”

DONNE.

“Be, therefore, no stranger to this face; see Him here that you may know Him, and He you there; and then as a picture looks upon him that looks upon it, God, upon whom thou keepest thine eye, will keep his eye upon thee.”

Miller.
Bampton
Lectures,
p. 128.

Donne.
Ser. CLIV.
2 Cor. iv. 6.

SEED.

“When the discourse is directed to us, lending a favourable attention, and making pertinent replies; like a fine picture which seems to fix an eye upon, and direct its views to each person in the room, who looks upon it and eyes it attentively.”

MELVILL.

“Such is your nature that, without constant vigilance, the direction may be gradually changed, and yet appear to you the same, even as the eyes of a well-drawn portrait follow you as you move, and so might persuade you that you had not moved at all.”

Seed.
Discourses
preached at
the Lady
Moyer's
Lecture,
i. 365.

Melvill,
Sermons on
Facts of
Scripture,
ii. 171.

Read one more example from a preacher of the Elizabethan age, and of the present :—

OLD CHURCHES.

HENRY SMITH.

Smith,
p. 300.
Edit. 1675.

Bradley,
i. 271.

“ This is our life, while we enjoy it; we lose it like the sun, which flies swifter than an arrow, and yet no man perceives that it moves. He which lasted 900 years could not hold out one hour longer; and what is he now more than a child that lived but a year? Where are they which founded this goodly city? which possessed these fair houses, and walked in these pleasant fields; which entered these stately temples; which kneeled in these seats; which preached out of this

BRADLEY.

“ Even the works of our own hands remain much longer than we. The pyramids of Egypt have defied the attacks of 3000 years, while their builders sank, perhaps, under the burden of fourscore. Our houses stand long after their transient proprietors are gone, and their names forgotten. Where is now the head that planned, and the hand which built this house of God? They were all reduced to ashes 500 years ago. The very seats we sit on have borne generations before they bore

place but thirty years ago? Is not earth turned to earth, and shall not the sun set like theirs when the night comes?"	us, and will probably bear many after us. The remains of those who once occupied the places we now fill are underneath our feet."
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It is not intended to accuse the
moderns of wilfully defrauding the
ancients. The resemblances may be
unintentional. The object of the pa-
rallel is to urge the diligent study of
our ancestors in divinity. The antique
legend, which gave the sweetest song
to nightingales that built their nests
near the tomb of Orpheus, may have a
moral for prose.

The study of
old divines
recom-
mended.

The elaborateness of the early style
was not felt to be wearisome. Hearers
and readers in 1600 were seldom in a
hurry. But now and then rambling
through the reigns of Elizabeth and
James, or of the first and second Charles,
we overtake a loitering expounder,
who has a large gift of tediousness,

Early
English
eloquence
charac-
terized.

and might have assisted the German professor in his course of lectures upon the first chapter of Isaiah, which extended over twenty years, and was left unfinished. In the true Masters of theological rhetoric, however, the wandering and scattered utterance had, generally, intention and method. They spread out their thoughts and images, as a skilful general invests a strong fortress with troops; and threw reasoning into a circle, to besiege a hostile argument and cut off escape. Milton's definition is realized. The words in "well-ordered files fall aptly into their places." Similes and metaphors are rarely ornamental figures, mere combatants on a rhetorical parade, with music and standards for show. They carry weapons, and are ready for action.

Its defects
indicated.

The epoch of elegance had not arrived, and the eye of taste discovers many violations of its laws; but the

most objectionable fault is the mixture of spiritual and worldly things ; as in continental cities a shop is encrusted on a cathedral. South is a notable offender. He writes a political note on a Gospel, and couples Cromwell and Peter in a sentence. Much of this familiarity may be traced to the Miracle-play, which had left a popular impression behind it. Statesmen and Prelates were scarcely alive to the discord ; in the first edition of the Bishops' Bible the portrait of Leicester was prefixed to Joshua ; and, in 1574, the arms of the Primate Parker replaced Burleigh as a decoration of the Psalms.

In whatever light we examine it, the sermon of the seventeenth century continues to be a problem of literature. It flourished amid ignorance, and withered under education. The "plain" manner came in with the national school. Day by day, the jewels of the Breastplate were more

The old and
the modern
sermon
compared.

Donne at
Lincoln's
Inn.

Some fea-
tures of his
rhetoric
enumerated.

clouded, and the superb scenery of Truth was buried deeper in snow. The public mind has taken the tone of its teachers. Sublimity is darkness, and the glow of the Prophet is a poetical turn. Imagine Donne re-appearing in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn with one of the discourses which he delivered to the Society of 1618. Let him exhibit, in all its fulness, that manifold style which was the delight of his friends and of the crowd;—the imperial logic, the gorgeous perspective of imagery, the poem in a word, the melting pathos, the rapturous piety, and the splendour of language that flowed over the argument and adorned it, like a crimson mantle upon armour. Picture the uneasy rustle of the Benchers, and the bewilderment of the Verger.

Why should this change of opinion be? Must we adopt a saying of Pascal, that people in their hearts love

nothing but mediocrity? If a practical exhortation be desired, Donne offers it. His summons to work is simple, hearty, and unwearied. A judge and a master recommended Demosthenes to the village preacher. Surely, any style is better than that which is plain in the complete absence of expression, and simple in having no thoughts to convey. Is it surprising if the dead masses slumber under such appeals? The fervour of the old eloquence is needed to strike heat into the sinner. His cure is to be wrought by no servile hand. Gehazi might have laid Elisha's staff for ever upon the Shunammite's child. The eyes open only to the Prophet's call. The kindled lips of inspired Genius must breathe over the benumbed soul before the colour of health will return, the baptismal flame be fanned into warmth, and the son of the Church be delivered to his Mother.

H. J. Rose
on the com-
mission and
duties of the
clergy.

2 Kings,
iv. 29.

XXXV. — PHILOSOPHY AND ITS
DELIGHTS.

Bacon's
description
of know-
ledge.

Division of
Philosophy.

IT was a remark of Bacon, that knowledge resembles a tree which runs straight for some time, and then parts itself into branches. Of these, Philosophy is one of the most verdurous, and throws the broadest shadow ; whether we regard it in relation to spiritual truth, and call it Divine, or to the phenomena of the visible world, and distinguish it as Natural, or to the feelings and powers of Men, and show its restricted application by the title of Human, or Moral.

Philosophy comes into this discourse under its single aspect of lighting and adorning the thoughts. It is only Wisdom, with the girdle of Beauty, that belongs to our subject. Speculative theories are left in their barren splendour. Ingenious researches,

which obtain the name of Metaphysical, offer few lasting rewards. Exploring expeditions into the mind generally bring back fabulous news of the interior. The perplexed journey is made by twilight, and the dim impressions of the traveller become obscurer in their transmission. He seldom sees an object with sufficient distinctness to describe it. The question remains undetermined, if Ideas be inborn, as one observer affirms, or fragments of broken sensations, as another supposes, or fine chains coiled up in the brain, as they appeared to the inquisitive eye of a third.

Metaphysics
not fruitful
of instruction.

Disputed
origin of
Ideas.

The student, therefore, who is enamoured of the graces of learning, turns to authors who entertain his eye and feed his fancy with the loveliest pictures and the richest fruit. For this reason he is never weary of reading particular passages in Plato; such as the allegory which compares

The charm
of Plato.

the soul to a chariot with winged horses and a driver, and resolves its purest thoughts into remembrances of a brighter life in a nobler society. He learns a solemn and almost a Christian moral from the suggestion, that the soul of the philosopher will recover its lost grandeur the sooner, because, in a fallen and dark condition, it ever tries to recollect the things which higher Intelligences contemplate. An understanding, thus taught and illuminated, finds its eyesight cleared and strengthened. The earth on which it dwells is known to be Eden under a mist; in the common flower of the hedge, in the painted clouds, and in the sunshine or grass, it reads intimations of a better country,—

“Of all that is most beauteous, imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams.”

Such a student is greatly charmed by the manner in which wisdom is communicated. Gilpin compared a true philosophical style to light from a north window, strong but clear. The colourless depth of the Greek has the transparent freshness, without being cold; often a ray of exquisite imagination seems to dart through it, and leave a lustre and warmth. To the latest hour of his life, Plato polished and adjusted his illustrations and argument; in the significant commentary of an early critic, combining and curling, and weaving and unweaving his writings after a variety of fashions.

How a philosophical treatise ought to be written.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, rendered by Mr. Sewell.

Our own literature contains many lofty and serious views of the mysteries of man's nature. In these the student may

English philosophical authors, and their merits.

“ At intervals descry
Gleams of the glory, streaks of flowing light,
Openings of heaven.”

- Cudworth. Cudworth may be studied with pleasure and profit for the frequent majesty of his sentiments; Henry More for the wild strains of a tender and musical fancy; Norris for a serious Platonism, brightened by a heavenlier sunshine; and Berkeley for unequalled grace and harmony of manner. The system of Wollaston is fearfully mutilated on one side, but his moral dignity and deep sense of immortality lend impression to his teaching. It is unnecessary to speak of Butler, who, in the walk which he chose, is as incomparable as Hooker.

A caution
to students.
Vanity and
unbelief.

Philosophical studies are beset by one peril, — a person easily brings himself to think that he thinks; and a smattering of science encourages conceit. He is above his companions. A hieroglyphic is a spell. The Gnostic dogma is Cuneiform writing to the million. Moreover, the vain man is generally a doubter. It is a Newton

who sees himself in a child on the sea-shore, and his discoveries in the coloured shells. Bacon expressed the strong conviction of his experience, that a little knowledge of Philosophy is likely to draw the mind from God, while patient meditation commonly leads it back to Him again. The unripe thinkers use their learning to authenticate their doubts. Unbelief has its superstition, and the Infidel is more peremptory than the Inquisitor.

XXXVI.—THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES.

FLEURY, after excepting Latin, Italian, and Spanish, for general readers, and Greek and Hebrew for ecclesiastics, includes foreign languages among the curiosities of literature. In English he found no advantage to compensate a learner for its difficulty.

*Du Choix
des Etudes,
ch. xxxv.*

Selden puts the relative value of ancient and modern tongues with much archness, in comparing a person who quotes a Dutch, when a classical author might be used, to a guest leaving* a party of scholars to solicit a testimonial from the kitchen.

Eastern
tongues.

Johnson's
Arabic.

Champol-
lion.

The judgment of Fleury may fairly be questioned, but his omission of Oriental languages will not be disapproved. These mines are worked at enormous cost, and the returns are small. If Johnson's pension had come twenty years earlier, it would hardly have profited mankind in sending him, according to his wish, to Constantinople to learn Arabic. The rarity of such acquirements imparts a fictitious importance. We regard a person who speaks Chinese fluently, as we might look at a traveller accustomed to take his morning walk along the Great Wall. A shadow from the Pyramids falls over Champollion.

Of course every new language is a new instrument of power. He who has the widest knowledge may be said to possess the amplest capacity of enjoyment. Each dialect introduces him to a fresh country, with all its beauties of scenery and fruitfulness of production. He is a traveller over the world. But even mental pleasures may be dearly purchased. Familiarity with foreign tongues corrupts the idioms of his own. He catches the accent of his companions. Dryden attributed many of Cowley's defects to his continental associations, and said that his losses at home over-balanced his gains from abroad. That hideous German-English which infects our modern literature, may be thought to confirm the remark.

Advantages
and incon-
veniences
of knowing
many
languages.

Dryden's
apology for
Cowley.

Another apprehension rises. The time which is devoted to a foreign writer must obviously be taken from a native. Some sense of sacrifice is felt in

abandoning the fallen Angel of Milton,
with his face of " princely counsel,"—

" Majestic though in ruin,"

English
and Italian
preachers.

for the demon of Tasso, and his long
tail ; Shakespeare ought to be nearly
got by heart, before a summer after-
noon is spent with Alfieri ; — and the
theologian should enjoy very long days
of study who leaves Farindon upon
the shelf, to muse over Segneri. What
glorious poetry and prose must Schlegel
have neglected, while he read with lin-
gering eyes all the forgotten verses of
Boccaccio !

Difficulty of
translation.

The first duty of a reader is to study
the learning and genius of his own
country. But whosoever has leisure
and opportunity may profit by the
speech of other lands, since it enlarges
the Pleasures of Literature, and because
translations imperfectly reflect the ori-
ginal. They are landscapes or por-
traits transferred to the wood. Outline,

and grouping, and features may be preserved, but colour and life escape. By what process of skill can the copyist present, in their full splendour, the epithets of St. Paul, the silvery lights of Livy, or the picture-words of *Æschylus*? The weather-stains of Dante disappear in the modern fabric. The bloom of Petrarch melts under the touch. The polish rubs off from *Maffillon* and *Racine*, and the crowded thoughtfulness of *Pascal* is scattered.

St. Paul's
Epistles.

Maffillon
and Racine.

Another obstacle may be noticed to the success of the carefullest version,—a home-feeling generally injures the truth of a description. I am taught by the pencil-sketch of *Twickenham*, which *Pope* drew in the fly-leaf of his *Homer*. The trim grassplot runs up to the door of *Hector*. The character of a poem and a history suffers from the same cause—the complexion and dress are no longer national. *Cato* addresses the senate in a wig, and *Æneas*, on the arm of *Dryden*, has the lounge of the Mall.

National
truth
generally
sacrificed.

Dryden's
Virgil.

XXXVII.—DOMESTIC INTERIORS OF
LEARNING AND TASTE.

The rose-
garden; an
allegory.

THE Persian poet Saadi framed a lesson in a pleasant apologue. Two friends spent a summer-day in a garden of roses; one contented himself with the colours and perfume, the other gathered the choicest bloom, and carried it to his family. The happy home-life of genius is the moral of the story. We overlook Richardson reading a chapter of a new novel to a select circle in his grotto; and Sterne never wears so attractive an expression as by his own fire-side, while his daughter makes a fair manuscript, and his wife is busy with her needle. "I am scribbling away," he tells a friend, "at my *Tristram*; these two volumes are, I think, the best I shall write as long as I live. My Lydia helps to copy for me, and my wife knits and listens as I read her chapters." The poetic

Sterne at
home,
writing
"Tristram."

hearth of Weston, with the sofa and warm curtains, and the adventures of the traveller by land or water,

*Cowper's
Task.*

“by one made vocal

For the amusement of the rest,”

recalls the visitor of the rose-garden who put the leaves in his bosom. Nor should we forget Milton inviting a friend to waste a fullen day by the fire, cheered by a

“neat repast

Of Attic taste with wine, whence we may rise

To hear the lute well-touch'd, or artful voice

Warble immortal notes, and Tuscan air.”

*Sonnet xxi.
to Mr. Lawrence.*

We breathe the Persian's rose again in Titian's garden-supper, when the soft voices and instruments of Venetian ladies sounded from a thousand gondolas, gliding past in the moonlight.

A familiar letter of Pliny opens the domestic interior of a scholar seventeen hundred years ago. He was stirring

*Pliny's
home-life.*

His manner
of com-
posing.

with the dawn, and thinking gloom favourable to meditation, he had his chamber darkened. Such opposite tempers as Malebranche, Hobbes, Corneille, and Sidney seem to have shared this partiality. The morning was Pliny's season of composition. Having arranged his subject, he called his secretary, who wrote from his dictation. A saunter on the terrace, or beneath a covered portico, and a short carriage-ride, heightened his enjoyment of a siesta; afterwards he took a longer walk, which he improved by repeating a Greek or Latin speech. Supper concluded the day with a book, music, or an interlude.

Petrarch at
Vaucluse.

We have a graceful example in a poet who borrowed Pliny's language. Petrarch lived in the rose-garden. His was the day of the true scholar, who found in Vaucluse a hermitage of fancy. Often he spent the hours from early morning in unbroken me-

dition, going forth to his work of taste until the evening. At other times his humour was rural, and he wandered among the leafy woods, while his shadow lengthened in the moonlight. Occasionally he gave himself up to waking visions by the water-side, to the tranquil idleness of fishing, or to the culture of his orchard.

A dog was his watchful companion. His dog.

It lay at his bedroom door, rousing him by a sharp rap of the paw when he overslept himself, and the day promised a cheerful excursion. The moment the poet appeared his dog led the way to the familiar haunts, brisk with joy, and continually turning its eyes backward. The rugged fisherman and his withered wife, who composed Petrarch's domestic establishment, would have received small satisfaction from the richest rose-leaves he gathered; but to his own vivid sense of sweetness no odour was lost. And doubt-

Charms of
poetical
loneliness.

less he had days of solitary happiness, when the Muse brought him presents, not less delightful, if less real, than the Homer which he received from the Byzantine ambassador, and placed in rapturous admiration by the side of Plato.

Rubens in
his painting-
room.

It might be agreeable to look for versions of Saadi's apologue in the studio of the artist; to observe Rubens consecrating his daily occupations with a devotional temper, surrounded by the finest works of ancient genius, and nourishing his imagination by passages from Livy, Virgil, and Plutarch, which an attendant read to him as he painted. But I turn to a portrait more serious and interesting, — that of good Bishop Hall, who has furnished a sketch of his own studious life in a letter to Lord Denny. No trait is wanting to complete it. Like Milton. his famous contemporary, he was up in summer with the bird that first

Bishop Hall,
delineated
by himself.

Milton.

rises, and in winter often before the found of any bell. His first thoughts were given to Him who made the cloud for rest and the sunshine for toil. Begins the day with devotional exercises. While his body was being clothed, he set in order the labours of the day, and entering his study besought a blessing for them upon his knees. His words are:—"Sometimes I put myself to school to one of those ancients whom the Church hath honoured with the name of Fathers; sometimes to those later doctors, who want nothing but age to make them classical; always to God's Book." The season of family devotion was now come, and, this duty heartily fulfilled, he returned to his private reading. One while, as he tells us, his eyes were busied, and then his hands, or contemplation took the burden from both; textual divinity employed one hour, controversy another, history a third; and in short intervals of pensive talk with his Mixes reading and meditation.

thoughts, he wound up the scattered threads of learned research for future use. Thus he wore out the calm morning and afternoon, making music with changes.

Is a friend
to liveliness
and society.

At length a monitor interrupted him. His weak body grew weary. Before and after meals he let himself loose from scholarship. Then company, discourse, and amusement were welcome. These prepared him for a simple repast, from which he rose capable of more, though not desirous. No book followed his late trencher. The discoveries and thoughts of the day were diligently recollected, with all the doings of hand and mouth since morning. As the night drew near he shut up his mind, comparing himself to a tradesman who takes in his wares, and closes his windows in the evening. He said that the student lives miserably who lies down, like a camel, under a full burden. And so,

How he
made him-
self ready
for repose.

calling his family together, he ended the day with God, and laid him down to sleep, took his rest, and rose up again, for He sustained him.

Our own century supplies a companion picture. The literary life of Southey at Kefwick. Southey was the rose-garden in the pleasantest reading of the allegory. He has recorded the various occupations of the day, and surely seldom were more learned fancies and religious hopes collected into the space that comes

“Between the lark’s note and the nightingale’s.” Dyer.

Three pages of history—equal to five of a quarto—were his morning task after breakfast; transcribing, copying for the press, biographical collections, or what else suited his humour, filled up the gaps of leisure until dinner-time. Then a different kind of toil relieved him. He read, wrote letters, saw the newspaper, indulged in a short slumber—for sleep, in his agreeable con-

A morning’s work.

Evening.

Beautiful
tone of
thought.

feſſion, agreed with his conſtitution. Tea introduced poetry, and Thalaba or Kehama underwent new trials, or exhibited more wonderful magic. Supper wound up the chain of thought, to ſtrike the hours of another day with the ſame regularity. And animating all his work is ſeen a happy, Chriſtian ſpirit, ever bringing the future into the preſent, and funning itſelf, by anticipation, in the lights of a brighter communion. Moſt touching are his words: — “ When I ceaſe to be cheerful, it is only to become contemplative—to feel at times a wiſh that I was in that ſtate of exiſtence which paſſes not away; and this always ends in a new impulſe to proceed, that I may leave ſome durable monument and ſome efficient good behind me.”

Hitherto we have been gazing into the chamber of the ſcholar, and the dreamer of magnificent dreams; but

the cottage-window ought to show an interior of beauty after its kind. There is no reason why the brown hand of labour should not hold Thomson as well as the sickle. Ornamental reading shelters and even strengthens the growth of what is merely useful. A corn-field never returns a poorer crop because a few wild-flowers grow in the hedge. This refinement of the poor is the triumph of Christian civilization.

A story is told of a Roman who expended vast sums in purchasing a household of learned slaves. He wished to have the best poets and historians in living editions. One servant recited the whole of the *Iliad*; another chanted the Odes of Pindar. Every standard author had a representative. The free Press has replaced the bondman. Literature is no longer an heirloom, nor can an Emperor monopolize Horace. A small outlay obtains a choicer collection of verses than the

The cottager and artizan may partake of these delights.

An ancient substitute for a library.

A shelf of books more available

than the
Roman's
literary
slaves.

ancient amateur enjoyed ; and without the annoyances to which he was subject. He had no familiar book for a corner, nor any portable poet to be a companion in a field-walk, or under a tree. Not even Nero could compress a slave into an Elzevir. Moreover, disappointments sometimes occurred. Perhaps the deputy "Pindar" was out of the way ; or a sudden indisposition of "Homer" interrupted Ulysses in the middle of an harangue, and left Hector stretching out his arms to the child.

XXXVIII.—ACCOUNTABLENESS OF AUTHORS.

A meditation
among
books.

FEW objects are more impressive than a large library by moonlight. The deep stillness, the glimmering books, and the lighted shadows upon the floor, affect the mind with a strange

solemnity. The student puts his hand upon a particular volume, the legacy of a shining and depraved genius, with a mournful remembrance of the words once uttered in Pilate's Hall. Wicked authors of great intellect. In a very different sense the speech betrays the writer. The sneer, the insult, and the license are idioms of the dark kingdom. How contemporaries flattered and successors magnify the author! His vices were weaknesses, — the waste splendour of a full mind. The chisel has touched the stone into his image. His portraits hang in noble galleries; engravings tempt the eye in shop windows; a thousand pages of panegyric build his epitaph. Can such a person have been a calm and dignified scorner of virtue and God? Presently the whole life and works of the departed rise clearly before the musing man, and the Hand that scared the Babylonian seems to

flash along the shadowy wall, and the letters of fire to start forth,—

Matt. xii. 37. “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

No homage to the false charity of the age, nor any fear of its blame, should benumb this instinct of sorrowful apprehension. I am not speaking of the sinfulness which Chaucer and Boccaccio bewailed, and Dryden at least acknowledged; but of that wilful and consistent impiety of which Biography offers appalling illustrations. Hume, mocking Heaven upon his dying pillow, rushed headlong with Lucian's ribaldry on his lips, into the dreadful presence of the Judge; and eyes that weep at a tragedy have no tears of blood for the saddest ever beheld.

Penitent
ill-doers
are not
denounced.

An un-
believer's
death-bed.

Southey felt disappointed in being refused admission into Gibbon's gar-

Visiting the
homes and

den. But what concern has a Christian with the chamber where Messalina wanted, or the study in which Arctine blasphemed? Intellectual guilt is to be punished with severity proportioned to its turpitude and destructiveness. A book is even more than the life treasured up which Milton considered it to be. It is the soul disengaged from matter. It is a fountain that flows for ever. What should be done to the man who lavished his fortune in naturalizing a fever, and organized a system of propagating the plague through the Post-office? The execration of the world would drive him into the wilderness. Yet it has been thought that a man had better be defiled in his blood than in his principles.

It was the conjecture of a grand and stern thinker, that a departed spirit may retain a living sympathy with the evil fame and influence of its

haunts of
unchristian
writers.

The deadly
properties of
a book.

The state
of a soul in
another life
may be
affected by
the sense

of the
destroying
power left
behind it.

earthly career, and receive startling intimations of the corrupting and enduring might of Genius in a succession of direful shocks ; every quickening of the pulse and clouding of the faith, by a voluptuous or sceptical book, darting a pang of intolerable agony into the author's heart. Under this affecting view of the accountableness of literature we may look upon each betrayal to vice and unbelief as a dismal episode of spiritual torment ; upon each deathbed of crime, first taught and cherished by the ministry of the pen, as a sharper sting given to the worm ; and upon fathers' and mothers' sighs over lost children, as so many gusts to freshen the flame and the anguish of the Middle State.

Books, of which the principles are diseased or deformed, must be kept on the shelf of the scholar, as the man of science preserves monsters in glasses. They belong to the study of the mind's

morbid anatomy. But they ought to be accurately labelled. Voltaire will still be a wit, notwithstanding he is a scoffer. We may admire the brilliant spots and eyes of the viper, if we acknowledge its venom and call it a reptile.

The accountableness of authors has been enforced ; but there is likewise a responsibility of readers. The deep reflection of Davenant admits of a larger application :—

*Postscript to
Gondibert.*

“The plays of children are punished; the plays of men are excused under the title of business.”

Readers, whose life is one long task-work of idleness, may recollect that time is religious money, certain at a future period to be called in ; and that a sleepless Eye is keeping the account. The column of debt will show an alarming balance, when the outrages of Eugene Sue, and the politer wickedness of the French lady who calls

*George
Sand.*

herself a man, are seen to have absorbed the hours, or even the leisure of a week. Feminine education is beyond the boundary of this Discourse. Yet surely the mission of Woman demands a higher teaching than modern instruction usually affords. It is an adjustment of mechanism rather than a shaping of mind. One might imagine that the ultimate aim and result of her creation was to be realised, in the pursuit of some flying composer of visionary swiftness; in pasturing uncomfortable cows upon thirsty fields of red chalk; or exhibiting the Great Mogul scowling frightfully in worsted. In this respect the nineteenth century will gain little applause by a parallel with the sixteenth; when the brightest eyes were familiar with Greek as now with Rossini, and a Latin letter to Ascham about Plato was run off with the fluent grace of an invitation to a wedding. Some thinkers will perceive

in those decorations of the mind a lasting fascination not always found in later accomplishments, and consider them more likely to win unquiet hearts from wandering and turmoil,—

“To fireside happiness and hours of ease,
Blest with that charm—the certainty to please.”

XXXIX.—THE CULTIVATED MIND AND THE UNINFORMED.

It was a happy thought to compare a mind, enriched by reading and reflection, to a room in which a person talks with a beautiful woman, among the balmy lights of a summer evening ; and to see the image of a mind, neglected and rude, in the same apartment, when the sun is set and the lovely occupant has gone away. The man of taste and learning recognizes himself in a figure. The cheering presence of Beauty and the magical effects

The mind compared to a sunny, and a dark room.

of colour are continually within him ;
while ignorance sits dark and lonely,
till education opens its eyes to the
flush of radiance, and unlocks its ears
to the wise charming of the Charmer,—

“The sweetest Lady of the time,
Well worthy of the golden prime.”

The leaf
that grows
into a tree.

The pleasure is within the reach of
all true seekers. The common flower
does not grow by the cottage-door
more willingly in the sun and rain.
Mirandula mentions a plant whose
leaf, taking a strong hold of the
ground, shoots up into flourishing
branches. The fiction of the Italian
seems to be an emblem of Knowledge.
A winter evening thoughtfully em-
ployed may be the leaf, that, striking
its root downward and spreading up-
ward, will be covered all over with
boughs and fruit. A day opens into
a week, a week blossoms into a month,
until the persevering learner is em-

bowered and refreshed by the foliage and clusters of a year. This tree has a healing property; every fresh acquirement is another remedy against affliction and time. The sick soul possesses a holier hospital for its fever, or its wounds; but Literature is often a portico, or outer chamber; and Homer prepared a costly elixir, when he showed Minerva concealing the wrinkles of Ulysses.

Literature a
hospital for
sufferers;

beautifies
old age.

One true blessing of literature lives in the inward light and peace which it bestows. Its music is in the heart. Bentley advised his nephew never to read a book that he could not quote. As if the thrush in the May-leaves did not contradict the caution! The small insect that climbs a blade of grass in the corn-field, shows a better way in every happy twinkle of its burnished wings.

False
opinion of
books.

The lesson
taught by
birds.

A sequestered spirit of meditative enjoyment is recognised in much of

Temper of
early poets.

our early Fancy and Learning. D'Israeli indicates a certain alarm at the Printing Press. The publisher of England's *Helicon* pasted slips over the names of the contributors. Sidney wrote the *Arcadia* for the woods of Wilton. Sackville's Induction to the *Mirror of Magistrates* was sent abroad unacknowledged.

The inward
blessedness
of the
student.

A sincere lover of Literature loves it for itself alone; and it rewards his affection. He is sheltered as in a fortress. Whatever troubles and sorrows may besiege him outside, his well of water, his corn, and his wine are safe within the walls. The world is shut out. Even in the tumult of great affairs he is undisturbed. Dr. Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, had the two young princes entrusted to his care at the battle of Edgehill; having withdrawn them to a short distance from the fight, he sat down under a hedge, and taking a

A philosopher at a
battle.

book from his pocket, quietly perused it, until a ball from a gun grazed the ground close by, and obliged him to retire.

An affecting instance of the tenderness and compensations of Learning is furnished by the old age of Usher, Incident in the life of Usher; when no spectacles could help his failing sight, and a book was dark except beneath the strongest light of the window. Hopeful and resigned he continued his task, following the sun from room to room through the house he lived in, until the shadows of the trees disappeared from the grass, and the day was gone. he follows the sunshine to every window. How strange and delightful must have been his feelings, when the sunbeam fell brilliantly upon some half-remembered passage, and thought after thought broke from the misty words, as garden-flowers, marble statues, and orange-trees through the melting fog of an autumnal morning!

XL.—THE PARTING WORD.

THIS Discourse upon Literature and its Pleasures is now brought to a conclusion. Of many thoughts few have been gathered and woven; perhaps others of a better colour were thrown aside. Even a skilful artist would find the subject difficult from its extent.

A discourse upon literature is like a walk into the country.

A survey of the Intellect, in its ornamental developments, resembles a walk into a romantic country, where the attention is constantly invited on every side by agreeable objects. Field-paths, growing dusky in the distance, wind under trees; lone birds warble far down in the twilight of forest glades; or some venerable Hall, with mysterious windows and mossy terraces, seems to sleep in the warm valley.

An old mansion.

But time restrains the wanderer's footstep within the beaten track. Short pauses are all that he can afford;

under the blossoming copse, by the
 ancestral gate, or among the tall grass
 that clothes the tombs of the hamlet.
 At length his joy begins to be pen-
 sive. Something of this feeling is How the
 student
 resembles
 the walker. experienced by the student in his
 ramble into Literature. The varied
 landscape tempts him from the high
 road; low notes of Poetry steal out
 of overgrown and unvisited haunts;
 stately ruins of wisdom touch his
 heart; until sitting, for a while, in The tombs
 of celebrated
 authors,
 and their
 associations. the burial-ground of Genius, he
 mourns the magnificence that is va-
 nished. It may be that his memory
 goes back into remote years, and mar-
 shals before his eyes, in plume and
 armour, a train of knights riding Knights
 setting
 out for
 Jerusalem. from the grey manor-house to the
 Sepulchre of the Holy Land. Nor
 would the vision be altogether idle —
 for what are Poets, Philosophers, and
 Men of gorgeous fancies, but the
 chivalry of Genius setting out in the

The mind's
chivalry; its
struggles and
victories.

morning of strength, to vanquish enemies of Virtue, and bring home treasures of renown? How dazzling is their march with Fame in the van! Much they suffer; many depart; few return. The bravest sink wounded in the battles of life; fierce arrows pierce the bosoms of the generous. Some faint in the wilderness, with the fountains in sight. So the tale of Literature is sorrowful, as well as glorious. The glittering Pageant incloses a funeral procession, and the banner of Victory droops over the hearse of the Conqueror.

The
honours of
literature
are never
to be
lavished on
unworthy
followers.

The panegyric of Literature, its Pleasures, and Advantages, belongs only to the dignified and ennobling efforts of the understanding; to that Imagination, which may embellish the universe, and that Philosophy, which darts a guiding flame into the opening eyes of the ages yet unborn.

Whosoever has drunk from the

pure springs of Intellect in his childhood, will continue to draw from them in the heat, the burden, and the decline of the day. The corrupted streams of popular entertainment flow by him unregarded. He lives among the society of an elder age. Tasteful Learning he numbers with the chiefest blessings of his home; when clasping the hand of Religion, it becomes its Vassal and its Friend. By this union he obtains the watchfulness and the illumination of two companions, loving and beloved, who redouble his delights in health, bring flowers to his pillow in sickness, and shed the lustre and peace of the Past and the Future over the blackness and consternation of the Present.

The student's friends are few, but noble.

The Guardians of life.

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